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A Reformed Biweekly | 64th Year of Publication | September 28, 2009 | NO. 2873 | $2.00

CHRISTIAN COURIER

Canadian pro-life movement gains momentum

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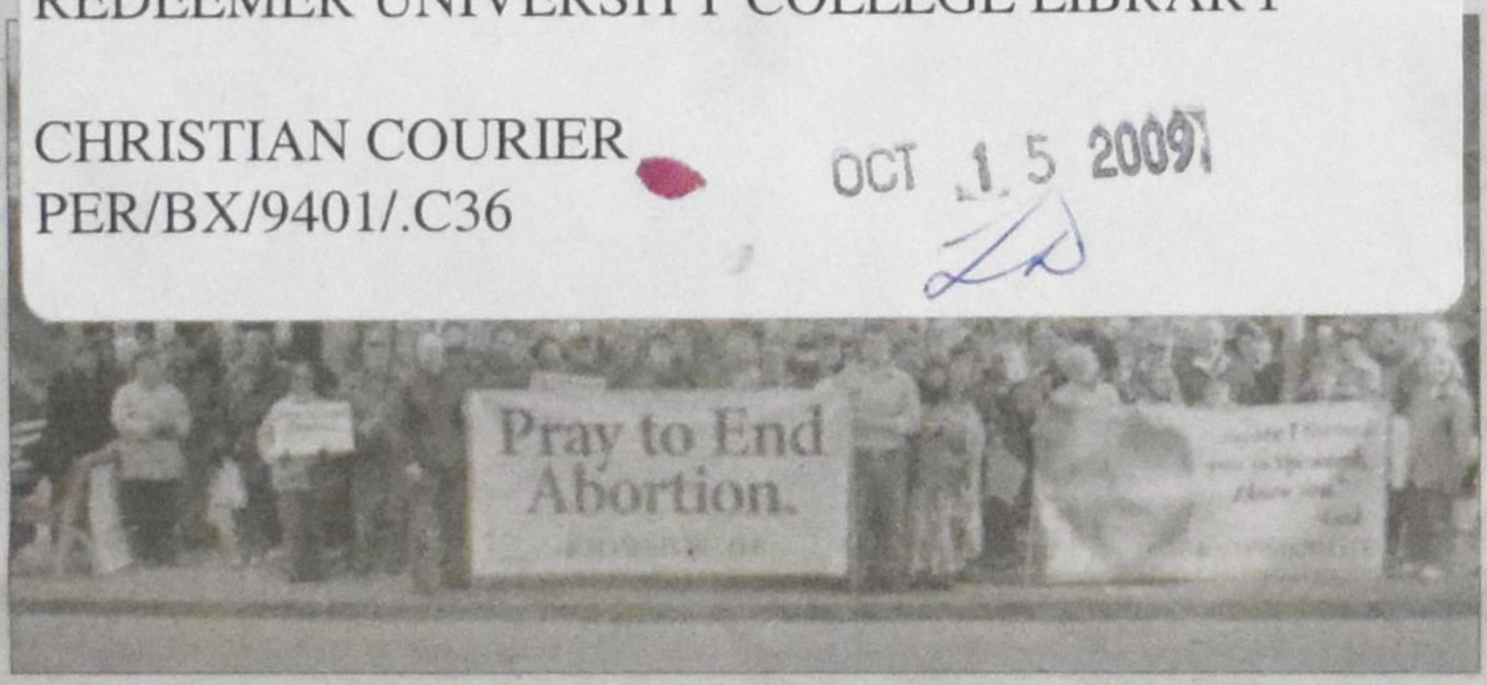
Patrick B. Craine

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA – Since 1988, Canada has been the only country in the developed world with no law regulating abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy. Polls indicate a downward trend in public support for Canada's most vulnerable children over recent years. An important shift, however, is taking place among the people called on to perform abortions: Canadian obstetricians and gynaecologists. A survey of Canada's ob/gyns presented at this year's annual meeting of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOCG) in Halifax found that sixty-one percent refuse to conduct abortions. Of those, fifty percent indicate their position is because of personal beliefs. The last survey of this kind, from 1991 by the SOCG, found that forty-nine percent of Canada's ob/gyns opposed abortions. The increase in the number of conscientious doctors is encouraging.

The growing success, further, of the annual March for Life on Parliament Hill speaks powerfully to the ground gained by Canada's pro-life movement. The March was already the largest annual campaign on the Hill, but this year it shattered its previous attendance record with 12,000 people turning out to walk the streets of Ottawa in defense of the dignity and inviolability of all human life. Not only has attendance skyrocketed, but the average age of attendees has gone down dramatically as more and more youth are getting fired up for the cause. According to the organizer, Campaign Life Coalition, three thousand people attended in 1999 with an estimated average age of forty, whereas in 2009 the average age was under twenty-five. These attendance numbers do not include the numerous provincial marches that parallel the national march.



40 Days for Life participants gather in Canada's capital to fast, pray and stand vigil.

The 40 Days for Life campaign is another significant movement – relatively recent but already making waves across the continent. For forty days, twenty-four hours every day, volunteers hold vigils in front of abortion facilities and hospitals. The campaign has exploded in popularity throughout the U.S. and it's reverberating across the border. The first campaign was conducted in College Station, Texas in 2004. Other communities caught on, and in the fall of 2007, a national campaign had over eighty cities participating. This fall, from September 23 to November 1, at least 212 cities will pray, around-the-clock, for an end to abortion. The first Canadians participated last year, and this fall, seven Canadian cities have signed up: Halifax, Fredericton, Montreal, Ottawa, Kitchener, Toronto (two locations) and Winnipeg.

Conflicting information

Statistics Canada released abortion statistics for 2002-2006 in August, with numbers that – at first glance – are encouraging for the Canadian pro-life movement. According to the report, the number of abortions in Canada dropped steadily from 2002 (105,535) to 2006 (91,377).

See **Pro-life** *on page 2*

Russia reintroduces religion in school

Hendrik Vlaar

MOSCOW, RUSSIA – President Dmitri Medvedev has recently set in motion a new curriculum that teaches religious culture and morality within the first four primary levels of the Russian education system. The material will teach secular ethics as well as the foundations of religious culture from an historical perspective. It is designed to contribute to the "spiritual and moral formation" of Russian students.

The move is an historical anomaly for Russia. Just over fifteen years ago, during the finalizing of the 1993 constitution, the absolute separation of religion from the Russian state was enacted within the document's fourteenth article, making Russia an officially secular state. From the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, suppression of the Russian Orthodox Church has been commonplace. After a ninety-year sabbatical, however, religion is making its way back into the centre of Russia's political and social culture.

Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill speaking to President Medvedev in August.

Following Putin's lead

Medvedev's brainchild is not entirely his own, nor is it entirely novel. Experimental courses teaching religion and ethics were introduced under former president Vladimir Putin in 2006, mandatory in four western *oblasts* (regions) and offered as an elective in ten others. This curriculum highlighted the history of Orthodox Christianity in Russia, a focus that has been officially inaccessible to many previous generations. Putin was also concerned about improving the moral fabric of a nation whose education system has been deprived of any official education on ethics, either religious or secular.

See **Russian education** *on page 2*

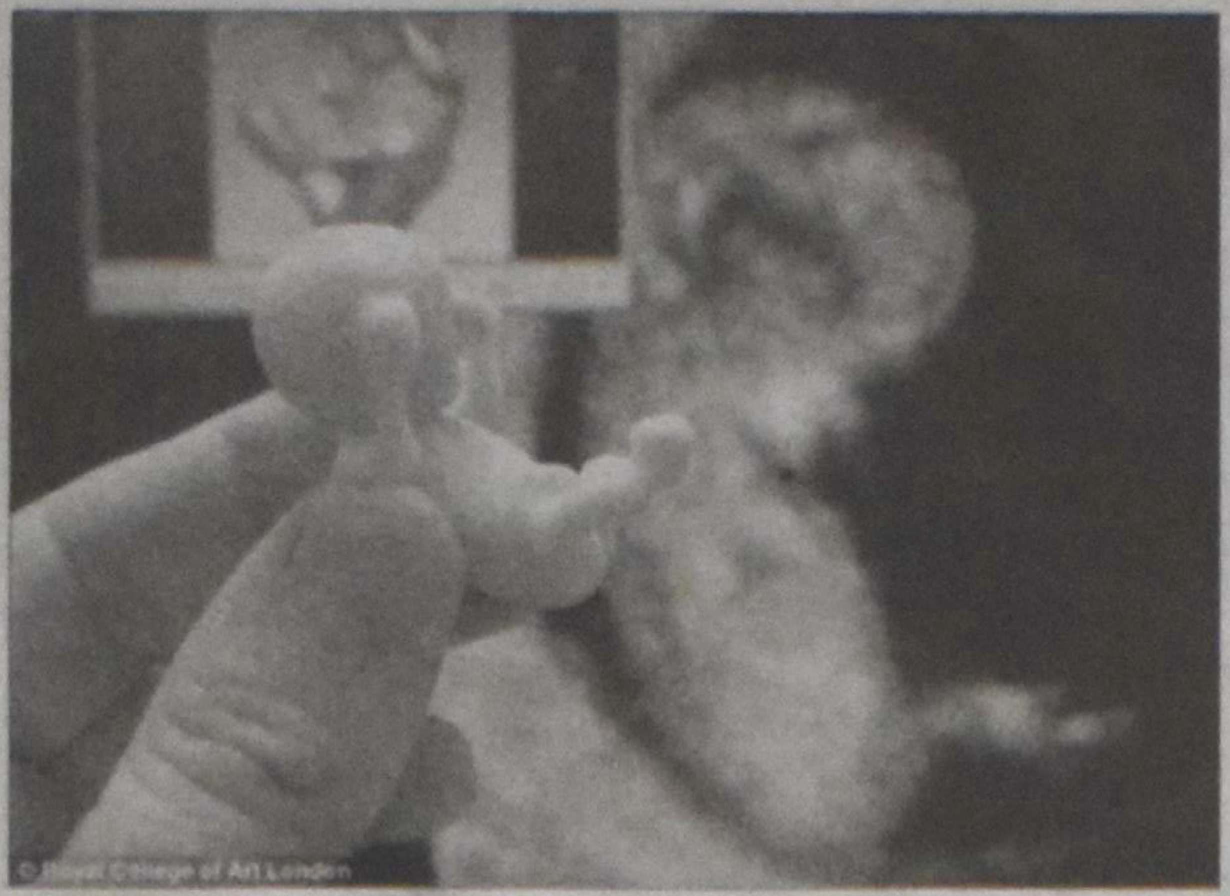
Hot topic

Interestingly, a variation on this debate is happening elsewhere. In early September, the Vatican affirmed that all education should include a religious dimension, but warned bishops in a letter that some attempts at teaching ethics or religious history end up confusing students and doing more harm than good (see related article on page 9).

In Texas, the Board of Education may revise its curriculum to give more credit to the influence of Christianity on America's founding fathers (page 9). And co-editor Bert Witvoet joins the discussion in his editorial (page 4) with a look at changing laws in Quebec's Catholic schools. – *Eds.*

News

Pro-life ocontinued from page 1



This life-size model of an unborn baby, created with new technology from the Royal College of Art in London, may help the pro-life movement even more than ultrasounds.

The numbers are misleading, however, as StatsCan itself concedes. For one thing, the survey is voluntary; the footnotes admit that not all abortion facilities participated. In 2006, three provinces (New Brunswick, Manitoba, and B.C.) did not even submit abortion statistics.

In fact, as Campaign Life Coalition BC president John Hof points out, adding the 2005 stats from those three provinces (18,322) to the 2006 stats results in 109,699 abortions for 2006, which is a marked increase. StatsCan will not release more recent data and the numbers are too sketchy to really formulate a judgment, which leaves the public with disconcerting and frustratingly unclear information.

Another disturbing trend is the escalating effort to suppress the pro-life message, as the Parliamentary Pro-Life Caucus (PPLC) highlighted in their press release before this year's March for Life.

"In the last 12 months we have seen an alarming increase in the number of cases where pro-life groups have had their free speech suppressed," said PPLC chair Rod Bruinooge. "From student unions and campuses, to advertising regulators, pro-life free speech is being treated by some as unworthy of protection" (see example in sidebar ad).

This clamp-down, however, indicates that the pro-life message has been getting through.

"It doesn't surprise me that our opponents attempt to suppress pro-life messages," Bruinooge says, "because the truth is powerful."

If statistics tell us anything, the pro-life movement in the United States is also winning people over, at least for now. In May, for the first time since Gallup began asking the question in 1995, more Americans called themselves pro-life than pro-choice. Their July poll confirmed this result, with forty-seven percent identifying themselves as pro-life and forty-six percent as pro-choice. Gallup is supported by another poll conducted this summer, commissioned by the Knights of Columbus, which found that forty-nine percent identified as pro-life, up from forty-four percent in October 2008.

The victory assured

While statistics are not always straightforward, the pro-life movement is mobilizing powerfully. Christians of all varieties in Canada have been successfully joining forces in fighting this great civil rights battle of our time. Despite our differences, all Christians worth the name can unite under the pro-life banner, and must pool their strength all the more. The temptation, particularly for those of us who have never known a society without abortion, is to think that we are fighting a losing battle or that our efforts do not result in lasting change. But, of course, as Christians we know that the battle is already won. Christ has already conquered sin. We will absolutely, without any doubt, effect powerful and lasting change for his kingdom and his people if we unite our efforts to him.

Patrick Craine resides in Halifax with his wife Jenna and newborn son Noah. He is a freelance writer pursuing an M.A. in Philosophy.

Pro-life message suppressed

One notable case involved the censoring of an ad campaign run by LifeCanada featuring this image of a pregnant woman. The City of Hamilton removed the ad from its bus shelters after receiving complaints that it was offensive. In spite of the truth of its message, Advertising Standards Canada ruled that the ad was "deceptive."

Russian education continued from page 1

The 2006 pilot program was not well received; in fact, it was fiercely opposed by religious and secular communities alike – especially Russia's Council of *Muftis* (Islamic scholars).

Council chairman, Gainutdin.

The Council's chairman, Ravil Gainutdin, stated that the program disregarded Russian law and threatened "inter-religious stability in Russia." Indeed, the Russian constitution has not yet been amended to make allowance for state-supported religious education, and a 20-million-strong Russian Muslim population thought the course's emphasis on Russian Orthodoxy was unacceptable (as did the Jewish minority).

Members of the scientific community were also opposed to the pilot project, viewing it as a form of state-sponsored indoctrination. In a 2006 letter sent to President Putin, the Russian Academy of Sciences expressed their concern over the increasingly dominant role the Russian Orthodox Church was having on other sectors of society. Physicist Vitaly Ginzburg, one of the letter's co-signers, objected to the age of the course's targets.

"When someone is 15 or 16, then she or he can be taught the history of religion. But why do they need it in elementary school?" he asked.

Ginzburg's question was reflective of the broader and more widely held concern regarding an increasingly intertwined relationship between the Kremlin and the Moscow Patriarchate: one in which the former fails to give equal consideration to minority religious groups and allows the latter to dictate policy. Medvedev has been careful to consider these concerns during preparation of the 2009 course.

The new, three-year pilot project, which will cover approximately twenty percent of Russian schools, will allow students to choose one or a combination of five streams within which to learn religious history and ethics. These streams will centre on the official religions of Russia – Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism – and secularism, the lattermost stream being the alternative available to students who refuse the religious studies option.

Moscow skyline, including a Russian Orthodox Church in the foreground.

Inter-religious dialogue

What does this mean for Russian society – social, political, and otherwise? While it is too early to predict how implementing the new course will pan out, formatting the education system to include the teaching of ethics and ethical foundations should make a positive contribution. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many have bemoaned the apparent break-down of Russian social values and corresponding rise in corruption. Members of the Orthodox Church have often concluded that this moral decline is a result of Soviet religious suppression.

The new course also avoids further breaching of the constitution's fourteenth article by implementing the multiple streams model, which includes both religious and secular options. Since the course has been tabled in late spring of this year, Russia's Council of *Muftis* have ceased their position of opposition, and Medvedev and Russian leaders have had mutually friendly meetings on the subject of how to counter extremism.

These talks are not just limited to obligatory P.R. work, however; they are part of Medvedev's larger campaign on inter-religious communication. In August he met with Islamic leaders from Russia's Northern Caucasus region in order to discuss how to support Islamic education as a means of reducing violence and meeting the needs of youth. Also on the agenda was a discussion concerning how to quell extremist activities. One idea brought fourth was to label the term "Muslim extremist" as illegitimate, for – according to the Council of *Muftis* – it is not "Muslim" to carry out violent, terrorist activities.

Medvedev also met with Buddhist leaders in Eastern Siberia on August 24, where he promoted Russian-based education.

"It is not necessary to receive any foreign assistance; we shall cope with all the problems ourselves.... [W]e have our own resources to promote the development of traditional confessions, which have existed in Russia for centuries," the President says. Medvedev also promises the addition of Buddhist chaplains within the region's armies.

Although current surveys show that between fifty to seventy percent of Russian citizens consider themselves Orthodox, only a fraction actually attend church. Critics believe that offering the five different streams of study will strengthen the Orthodox group while leaving those in the minority left wanting. Instead of fostering inter-religious harmony, some people believe the five-stream system will further polarize Orthodox Christians against minorities (particularly Muslims).

Whether or not the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church will strengthen ties further remains to be seen. If Medvedev continues to dialogue along the lines of inter-religious communication and representation, then workable, inclusive programs may indeed be on the horizon. Hopefully, these will lead to not only moral reparation, but to peace as well.

Hendrik Vlaar, a Redeemer student, is passionate about Ecological and Aboriginal Justice, as well as food and water sovereignty.

News

Taiwan's Chen gets life sentence for corruption

Jonathan Adams (CSM)

TAIPEI, TAIWAN – Taiwan's former president Chen Shui-bian was sentenced to life in prison for corruption and perjury today, in the latest development in what media here call the "trial of the century."

Mr. Chen received additional sentences for money-laundering and taking bribes, and a $6 million fine. He's expected to appeal the district court's decision. Chen's wife, former first lady Wu Shu-jen, also got a life sentence, with a 20-year sentence handed down to a key Chen aide, and lighter prison sentences for Chen's son, daughter-in-law, and others.

The case has gripped Taiwan for more than three years, becoming a public soap opera in which every move of Chen's extended family has been scrutinized and debated. But "scandal fatigue" has also set in, as the case has dragged on.

"Society isn't focused on this issue," says Hsu Yung-ming, a political analyst from Soochow University. "They care more about the future, under a new cabinet." Taiwan reshuffled its cabinet Thursday in a bid to calm public anger over the government's response to typhoon Morakot.

Chen's case began as allegations of misuse of a special fund for Taiwan's diplomacy, but then snowballed into charges involving millions of dollars moved through a complex web of shell companies and foreign bank accounts.

Some observers in Taiwan and abroad have criticized the handling of the case. Leaks to the media have been constant. A weekly tabloid correctly predicted Chen's life sentence, lending credence to complaints of loose lips in the judiciary.

Chen has also been in on-and-off detention since last November, including a month's detention without charge – treatment some see as excessive. His Democratic Progressive Party has repeatedly called for his release.

Chen himself declined to appear in court to hear his sentence. He continues to describe the case against him as a witch hunt, claiming he has been targeted by the ruling Kuomintang for his outspoken, pro-independence views.

Last August, he admitted that his wife had wired more than $20 million abroad. But he claimed the funds were leftover campaign contributions, not dirty money.

As president from 2000 to 2008, Chen constantly irked China – and the United States – with his brash trumpeting of Taiwan's independent democracy. Beijing rejects the island's claim to sovereignty, insisting Taiwan is Chinese territory that must return to the fold.

Relations between China and Taiwan have improved since May last year under the China-friendly president Ma Ying-jeou. Unlike Chen, Mr. Ma has sought to avoid offending Beijing and pursued closer cross-strait commercial ties.

Chen is now unpopular with most Taiwanese. Kuomintang supporters have long reviled him, and many of his own former supporters were dismayed by the corruption charges. They say he has sullied the party's image and set back the independence cause.

But a hard-core group turned out to protest the court decision Thursday. Some 40 police officers and rows of barbed-wire barriers kept a small group of emotional protesters at bay as the sentence was announced. They held yellow balloons and signs saying "Free Ah-bian [Chen's nickname]" and "Unfair Justice"; some scuffled with police.

"I'm not here to support Ah-Bian, I'm here to oppose Ma Ying-jeou," said Chen Yue-chun, a housewife from Taipei. "This is political persecution."

Professor Hsu said that even Chen's party isn't interested in defending his innocence at this point.

"They think he did something wrong, and they don't want to get involved in the legal case," said Hsu. "They want to focus on human rights instead – their bottom line is that Chen should be released."

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

Moving pictures, talking pictures

Everyone loves a good film. Creeping through the dark halls of a movie theatre is like crawling through a large wardrobe into a surprising, bright new world. The flickering light with its barely noticed but deeply felt musical score grabs you, charms you and captivates you. And "captivating" means it holds you tight.

I'll confess when the lights dim my heart revs up a few notches and I am totally mesmerized by the play of images before me. My shoes could be on fire and I would never notice – not unless the smoke interfered with my view of the screen.

Films bring delight. Who can watch Rowan Atkinson's air band busking in *Mr. Bean's Holiday* and not leak a little laugh through their lips? Who in the 1980s witnessed the quirky robots, dazzling light sabers, and the exploding space station of Lucas's *Star Wars* and could suppress the sense of wonder and triumph it all evoked?

Actually, I haven't sauntered by an usher in a Cineplex in years – except for that new-fangled church I went to last month that had its Sunday morning services in the theatre. This is a remarkable feat in many ways. It is the closest the church and cinema have ever been.

Amusement or art?

Even though photographic film was invented by an Episcopal priest (Hannibal Goodwin) and the first film shown was *The Passion Play of Oberammergau* (1898), preachers weren't friendly to the cinema when projectors first started aiming their light at the silver screen. The "talkies" (as they were called when sound was added) were not worth talking about in church circles.

In 1928, for example, the CRCNA Synod in a statement on "Worldly Amusements" urgently warned members against frequenting its darkened chambers (in addition to forbidding card playing and dancing). Over the years, Synod became less directive about where people's bodies ought to be (and not to be) and, instead, offered general principles of discernment. Movies were no longer "worldly amusements" but rather "the film arts" by 1966.

Today denominational magazines not only recommend movies, but some churches use the movie theatre as a sanctuary. Have we been enlightened or have we lost our way in the dark?

Many movies today are a waste of time, either because they are soul-sickeningly banal or monstrously violent. They add to the passively aggressive and narcissistically wired world that already winds all around us. Many flicks continue the bias Hollywood has against religion – *The Da Vinci Code* being a classic example.

Yet movies can shine some light into our lives, too. Many Christian teachers have garnered some handy tools for disciples of Jesus to consider in their experience of seeing films. This means not just measuring the moral example of a movie-story (for example, counting the number of cuss-words in the film) but by examining how the story, characters, dialogue and image-making of a film might shape us as viewers.

Eyes Wide Open

William D. Romanowski, for example, in his book *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture* (2001) suggests we delight in watching movies ("enjoy the ride") and then delve into some robust conversation afterward. God can be found in the movies – just as he is found in music and books. But, warns Romanowski, be aware that many Hollywood movies are melodramatically sentimental in their style, and often reinforce dominant American cultural values like individualism, materialism, and violence.

The book *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* by Robert K. Johnston suggests that church and cinema stop launching self-righteous monologues at each other and engage in real dialogue – where each has freedom to say its piece. Films can speak to us in deep, spiritual ways. Johnston explains that we get lost in a movie because it resonates with the struggles and victories of our own biography. Motion pictures can help us see our own lives more clearly – providing images for our unarticulated feelings as well as critically reflecting our culture back at us.

The unexamined film is not worth watching. If we do reflect on them, they can give us pictures by which to re-view ourselves and imagine new possibilities for who we might become. Rather than being a mindless diversion from life, they can be a portal into the mix of anxieties and passions of life. As powerful myth-making machines of the day they grab us, hold us, and shape us; and in doing so, they are a play of light and dark. That's worth talking about.

Peter Schuurman lives in Guelph, Ontario where he parents his two children, Joseph and Petra. He is also part-time faculty at Redeemer University College where he teaches World Religion.

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Guest Editorial/Editorial

An obituary for free market capitalism?

Jake Kuiken

Commenting on his remarkable public career as the neoliberal economist who headed the US Federal Reserve for 19 years, Alan Greenspan writes in his 2007 autobiography, *The Age of Turbulence,* that the experience gave him "an even deeper appreciation of competitive free markets as a force for good." One of the elements of that "deeper appreciation" he apparently gained during that lengthy career is the time-tested principle that he claims was first promulgated by Adam Smith in 1776. Here are Greenspan's own words: "Individuals trading freely with one another following their own self-interest leads to a growing, stable economy. The textbook model of market perfection works if its fundamental premises are observed: People must be free to act in their self-interest, unencumbered by external shocks or economic policy."

As most of us will attest, the events of the last 18 months or so have seen anything but a "growing, stable economy." In fact, the opposite is true, and even Greenspan has reluctantly acknowledged he was dead wrong.

Deregulation the culprit

In his testimony of October 23, 2008, before the US House of Representatives' Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Greenspan makes a startling admission. "I made a mistake in presuming that the self-interests of organizations, specifically banks and others, were such as that they were best capable of protecting their own shareholders and their equity in the firms." As the questioning sharpened during that hearing, Greenspan acknowledged that the time has come to encumber self-interest through increased government regulation.

Richard Posner, a Judge of the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, a law professor at the University of Chicago, a prolific author on law and economics and a widely acclaimed conservative public intellectual, directs his focus on capitalism itself and its boosters, the neoliberal economists, bankers and financiers. His recent book, *A Failure of Capitalism; the Crisis of '08 and the Descent into Depression,* makes no bones about the fact that deregulation of the economy is largely responsible for the global economic crisis. Beginning already in the 1970s, this band of boosters have subscribed to the point of view adopted by Alan Greenspan and the other organizations that form the Washington Consensus.

Some of the obvious consequences of this unencumbered view of free market capitalism are the growing income disparity, the rising number of Canadians without a home, the increase in gang-based violence, the growing dependence of governments on food and clothing banks as the way to ensure that citizens have the necessities for biological survival. Reliance on charity rather than justice is what governments offer citizens who have been wounded by the pursuit of self-interest resolutely promoted by Greenspan and the neoliberal economists, bankers and financiers.

Overlooked passage

In reflecting on the comments by both Greenspan and Posner, it's difficult not to be reminded of a seldom-cited section in Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* about "the rules of decency." Here, in his own words is what Smith wrote about these "rules."

"By 'necessaries' I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without. A linen shirt, for example, is, strictly speaking, not a necessary of life. But in the present times, through the greater part of Europe, a creditable day-labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt, the want of which would be supposed to denote that disgraceful degree of poverty which, it is presumed, nobody can well fall into without extreme bad conduct. Custom, in the same manner, has rendered leather shoes a necessary of life in England."

Perhaps if Greenspan, the economists of the Washington Consensus, the financiers of Wall Street and the bankers on Bay Street, had paid more attention to Smith's 1776 "rules of decency," the calamity that has fallen on millions of people around the globe might have been avoided. Rather than paying CEO's egregious salaries and millions in incentives and bonuses to risk other people's money, they might have turned their mind to the woman of colour who serves them lunch in their private dining rooms, chauffeurs them in their private limousines and cleans their private commodes but doesn't get paid enough for her and her children's necessaries.

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Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent bimonthly that seeks to: report on significant events in the Christian community and the world; express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective; provide contact for the Christian community.

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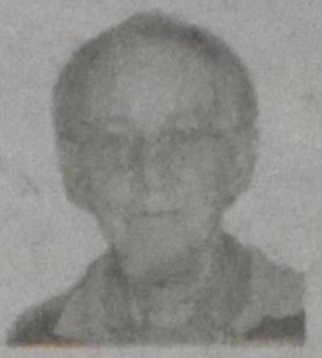
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
Web site: www.christiancourier.ca
Publications Mail Registration No. 09375
We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.
Canada

The tyranny of relativism



Bert Witvoet

Quebec schools must teach the provincially designed "Ethics and Religious Culture" (ERC) course to all students from Grade 1 to Grade 11. The course became mandatory already in 2008, but it has since been challenged in the courts by Catholic school parents who object not so much to the fact that their children will be taught about other religions but that the teacher must present these religions as equally valid.

In Quebec, Catholic schools are public schools because the majority of Quebecers are or have been affiliated with the Roman Catholic faith. So it is not surprising that Catholic schools fall under the jurisdiction of public school legislation. But even private schools in Quebec, whether they be Protestant or Muslim, must comply with the law. The Quebec Superior Court has recently overruled the objections of those who challenged the law, thereby severely curtailing freedom of religion in that province.

The Court ruled that parents do not have the ultimate authority over the moral and religious education of their children, at least not when it comes to their formal education. They are allowed to teach their own faith as the true faith at home … well, not quite: if the parents are homeschooling their children they must teach the ERC course, which contradicts their belief that the faith to which they adhere is the true faith. Conceivably, a homeschooling parent must say in the morning that all religions are equal, but may say at night that their own religion is the best or the only true religion.

Binding the conscience

In an article in the *National Post* (September 14), John Carpay and Karen Selick astutely argue that "since virtually every religion and moral code includes as one of its tenets a belief in its superiority over rival systems (or else why adhere to it?), Quebec's insistence on even-handedness is tantamount to compelling every teacher of religion or morality to deny or contradict some part of his creed." The oppressive ruling by the Quebec Superior Court violates Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees freedom of conscience and religion.

For Christians, the matter of compliance goes even beyond that of the Charter. We stand in a tradition that honours God above the State. This tyranny and idolatry of "tolerance" places the committed Christian teacher and parent in a position where they have to ask themselves whether they should obey Caesar rather than God. Obeying Caesar is limited to the things that are Caesar's, as Jesus pointed out very succinctly. When it comes to the integrity of one's faith, Caesar is without claim or jurisdiction.

Religion as culture

It is noteworthy that the course prescribed by the Quebec department of education is entitled "Ethics and Religious Culture." In other words, religion is treated as merely a cultural expression. Culture is what human beings fabricate. And, as everyone knows, culture is time-bound and place-specific. Culture is also subject to improvement and enrichment – we can learn from other cultures. That's not to say that some cultures are not preferable to other cultures (See my editorial "Not all cultures are created equal" of September 8, 2008). Yet no one dare claim that their culture is the only true expression of human thought and actions. Therefore, by reducing religion to a cultural expression the Quebec Ministry of Education and the Quebec Supreme Court place it out of the realm of divine revelation and firmly into the area of human endeavour. Christians must strongly object. Our faith, although culturally conditioned, does not find its origin or justification in the realm of human imagination and invention.

The Quebec situation is extremely troubling. It is a signpost of things to come. Today it is the school in Quebec that is threatened; tomorrow it may be the church and the home in all of Canada that must avoid any kind of stated preference for a given religion. The only religion that will be tolerated will be the religion of "relative truth." It doesn't take an apologist like Ravi Zacharias to conclude that "relative truth" is a contradiction in terms. But contradictions don't seem to bother the Quebec Supreme Court and the Quebec Ministry of Education. Or would they openly admit that there is no truth in life that can lay claim to our allegiance?

News

Random thoughts on new challenges

Let me respond to your "We never give up" article of August 10.

"Kingdom Vision," "Church Walls" and "Personalized Spirituality" can all be ideas that are both liberating and restricting. If "Kingdom Vision" is restricted to building institutions, "Church Walls" is restricted to building large sanctuaries and "Personalized Spirituality" is used to build perfect family life, we all may be missing out on what may be happening in the world. Currently, I believe, "social justice" is a common concern of many "types" of Christians.

How best to go forward with print media, or Internet technology is a challenge for many organizations. What do people do to "listen"? Some like to hear personalized stories, some like web sites and list serves, some like news only on paper.

A few weeks ago, we had a visitor at church looking for a *Christian Courier*. He was a subscriber, but missed the paper on his holidays. Have you thought about sending a copy to churches?

August Guillaume
Edmonton, Alta.

The editors reply:

Have we thought of sending a copy to churches? We have just finished mailing letters and complimentary copies to over fifty interested pastors of Christian Reformed churches to encourage them, and members of their congregation, to subscribe. Perhaps some of our "wisdom" may trickle into sermons. Besides, who doesn't want a well-informed pastor on the pulpit?

Some church libraries subscribe to *CC*, which would help your visitor on holiday who misses his copy. If more pastors subscribed, then visitors might be assured of finding recent issues in his or her study. By whatever method, we hope that more and more people will find a reason to pick up *CC*. We too are thinking about how to have a stronger presence on the web. Your comments and suggestions for how to spread the good news – in every sense of the word! – are always welcome. – *Editors.*

This is what retired pastor Ralph Koops from Cambridge, Ontario, has written to his fellow pastors:

"For us to be an influence for good in this nation, we need the kind of reading material *CC* provides. Without developing the kind of perspective *CC* has, we are ill prepared to address the culture of our time. I enjoy and need to read *CC* because it gives me an alternative to the secular press's view of the news. It shows me how the Bible is relevant for life in the world. It keeps my head above water in a cacophony of ideas. It raises my spirit. It is very encouraging. I am concerned about losing our Reformed perspective. Interestingly, many other evangelical Christians are intrigued by it. Think of a few such as Os Guinness, Mark Knoll, and Charles Colson. *Tolle lege*! (take and read)."

In Memoriam – Harry der Nederlanden

Already a year has passed since our friend Harry left us to be with his editorial Master. Harry died on September 25, 2008. To honour him, we want to publish two poems he wrote and a photograph he took.

We thank the Lord for Harry's faithful service as editor of *CC* for eight years, and we also say thanks to God for the way he has allowed us to carry the torch further along the road of Reformational journalism.

The editors

Went for a walk with a book, Fragments of Redemption *by Susan Handelman, to provide inspiration. Ruminating about our encapsulation in language. Attention drawn by vacant lot, grasses. No reason for it. Don't even know the names of the half dozen or more varieties. No reason to discern or pay attention. No reason to stop. Like Frost at his neighbor's woods. Something about the nature of poetry? Perhaps about language at its subliminal depth? No inevitability about the association with my father, but it does have a textual source, not deliberate or conscious but noticed afterward. Here's the poem. It's a first draft, so cut me a little slack.*

Harry

Grass

In a vacant lot I pass almost daily,
between gravel and ashphalt and trash,
the grass flourishes uncut, growing
tall, slender stalks and thick heads,
some with wheat-like kernels, heavy,
bending their stems like monks
at prayer, some with frail, feathery
heads that spread like fireworks.
Here it gathers in clumps with long,
spare blades; there thick whorls
of petals hug the earth; in between,
short, squat blades disperse themselves
in bold universality. Interrupted,
my walk – a discipline – faltered, halted.
I was not looking for allegories in grass,
but I was addressed, not by the Spirit,
by the grass, the grass that speaks to
flesh, and its speech was wholly prodigal,
superfluous – rustling and whispering
things pertinent only in untended
vacant lots, things indifferent to
discourse and communication, just
the thready rasp of air on frail reality,
like the rasp of my father's labored breath
as I held the slender stalk of his swaying
self so he could breathe, just breathe,
once more.

Dragon

One day as I was hunting snails,
I found a little dragon
beneath a purple cabbage leaf
and put him in my wagon.

I fed him chips and ginger ale
and taught him to say "Mother"
and told him that if he was good
he could eat my little brother.

At night he crawled beneath
my sheets and licked between my toes.
His tummy started rumbling hard,
so I fed him my brother's clothes.

I tried to keep him in my room,
where my mother wouldn't find him,
and brought him Jezebel, our cat,
to befriend him and refine him.

He now drinks very daintily
and licks his whiskers clean;
his manners are the very best
that I have ever seen.

He is so polished and refined
you'd think he was from Europe;
and when he ate my brother up,
he didn't even burrope.

found in Harry's file

Praying for a miracle

I usually pass on my *Christian Courier* for others to read, but I want to keep and use the article "Evaluating the worth of Alberta's Tar Sands" (August 24) to hopefully "wake up" more people to the devastation in the Bitumen sands.

China now wants to put in two billion dollars! We in British Columbia hope to have no pipeline to the coast and no tanker traffic but that will obviously take a miracle!

Jane Marshall
Midway, B.C.

Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association

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Advertising deadlines: display and classified advertising: Wednesday, 9 a.m. (12 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site **www.christiancourier** for more details.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published second and fourth Mondays of the month.

Address all correspondence to: 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838
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PRINTED IN CANADA

News

Peaceful protest sets precedence for unity

Angela Reitsma Bick

It's a gorgeous fall day, mid-morning, and a handful of people are emerging from the tents and tepees that make up the Anishinaabe Kweag Protest Camp. The camp is sprawled over a farmer's field opposite the main entrance to a proposed dump site in Tiny Township, known to the public as controversial Site 41.

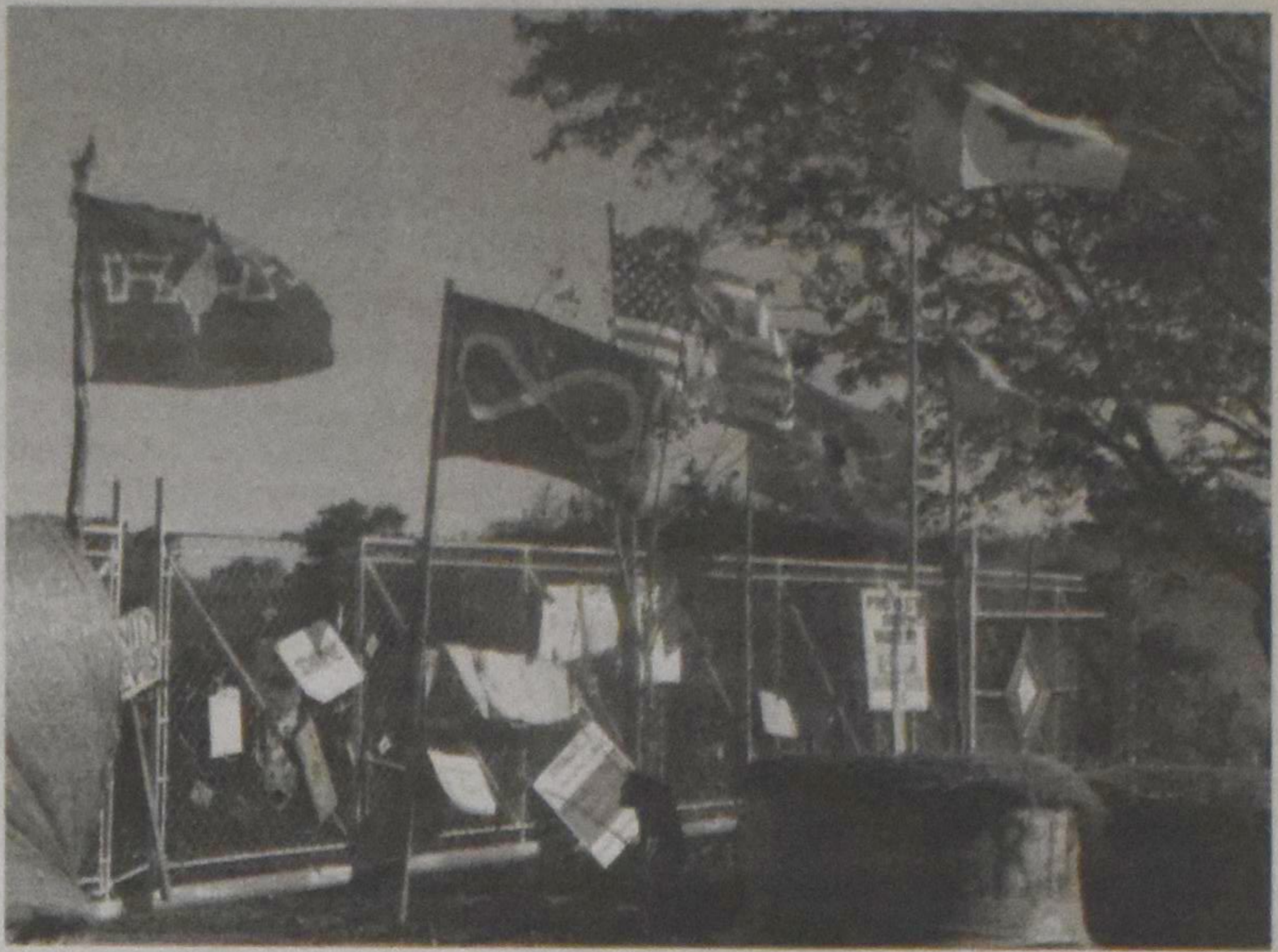
"How long have you been here?" I ask one man.

"That depends on what you mean by here," he says. "My people have been here for thousands of years."

The camp itself is 121 days old. It began when a group of Anishinaabe women from nearby Beausoleil First Nation spear-headed opposition to the dump's construction in early May. They established a peaceful protest by sitting each day in front of the gates to the dump's three entrances, and camping out across the road at night. Local farmers were quick to help out by bringing coffee, food and company to the protestors. Seniors, beach area residents, other First Nations and university students joined ranks with the women over the summer, and the struggle to stop the dump grew to almost epic proportions. Vicki Monague, a Beausoleil leader, says it's "the first time in Canada that non-native and First Nations have taken a stand side-by-side."

The land they are protecting sits over an aquifer, and opponents to the dump are certain that leachates from the garbage will contaminate the water, despite official reassurance that barriers will prevent seepage. The aquifer in Tiny Township, 150 km north of Toronto, supplies water to farms and communities all over Simcoe County. It runs from Georgian Bay into the Oak Ridges Moraine and Lake Ontario.

In 2006, a German scientist called Dr. Shotyk analyzed the aquifer and found that the water had fewer impurities than the average glacier – a standard of purity. Shotyk is well-known for his work testing water around the world. He compares the Alliston aquifer to the "cleanest layers of ancient arctic ice" because it is remarkably free of contaminants. Traces of metals such as lead are just a fraction of the amount allowed in Ontario drinking water. Since Shotyk's discovery, the public has been pressuring politicians to protect the "world's purest water."



Hay bales, flags and signs help block the main entrance to site 41.

Ripple effect

"Water, in my opinion, is the single most important environmental and human-rights threat of our time," according to Maude Barlow. As senior advisor on water to the president of the UN and the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, she visited the camp several times and discussed the issues with local councillors.

Opposition to the dump has taken several forms over the past few months. When preliminary construction on the site began in May, a local Walk for Water attracted 600 people. Similar numbers attended subsequent marches, rallies and concerts, and the protestors were encouraged when construction equipment was removed from the site on July 6. Over 2,500 people attended a rally on July 25, calling for a moratorium on further construction until the public could review the plan's specifics. Too much remains unclear about how the Council plans to protect the drinking water.

Another sign expressing the spirit behind the Site 41 protest.

Even though the *Globe and Mail* calls the protestors a "ragtag alliance of farmers, natives and knitting grannies," it's that unique, grassroots alliance that continues to inspire members of the camp today. On August 25, Simcoe County councillors acquiesced to public opinion and voted 22-10 for a one-year moratorium. Their next meeting, however, at the end of September may prove even more crucial, as they vote whether or not to permanently dismiss plans for a dump over the now-famous aquifer.

"While millions around the world are dying and going thirsty, Simcoe County is about to violate this unique and precious Canadian aquifer," Barlow chides. Back in May, when they were first setting up, Anishinaabe Vicki Monague announced, "We will not leave until Site 41 is stopped permanently!"

Four and a half months later, the remaining protestors seem equally adamant. As Kyle Koloff says, after welcoming us on the home-made boardwalk into camp, "We're here for as long as it takes. The threat hasn't gone away, so we're not going away."

From the Lab
Rudy Eikelboom

SfN meeting: 32,000 Neuroscientists and 100 (?) Christians

This October I expect to join more than 32,000 neuroscientists at Chicago's McCormick Convention Center for the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience (SfN). With more than 16,000 scientific presentations over five days, SfN is apparently the world's largest pure scientific meeting.

At this meeting a Christian neuroscience community also gathers. About 10 to 15 people meet for a Sunday morning prayer breakfast, and there is often a lecture about some aspect of how neuroscience connects to our faith that draws 50 to 80 people. The difference in numbers relative to the SfN meeting as a whole is daunting.

I enjoy the SfN meeting; I always learn something new about God's creation. There are a few thousand fifteen-minute talks, 8 to 12 per session around a specific theme. There are large lectures given by eminent scientists to audiences of 5000 plus. People get together to talk informally over lunch. But at the heart of this meeting are the poster sessions. Each morning and each afternoon over 1000 attendees put up posters that describe some of their recent work – about anything from the molecules that make up parts of the brain, through rat work, to studies exploring mental illnesses.

Each fall my students and I create posters describing our scientific work and print them on a 45-inch wide colour printer on a long roll of paper cut to length. They are posted for half a day, while one of the authors stands nearby to talk to interested passersby. I have talked to many students and a Nobel Prize laureate about my work at these meetings. After three hours we take down the poster, and the board is ready for the next session. When not presenting, we walk down rows of poster boards, stopping at the ones we find important. It is a humbling, overwhelming, and exciting experience to see what is new in neuroscience.

Need for discussion

While non-Christian scientists are not enemies, I sometimes feel a bit like Elijah, who said to God, "I alone am left." I pray that the response is similar: "Yet I will leave 7000 in Israel – all those who have not knelt to Baal" (1 Kings 19). I am sure there are many believers at this meeting who choose not to join us at these Christian events, but I wonder what we lose by our isolation.

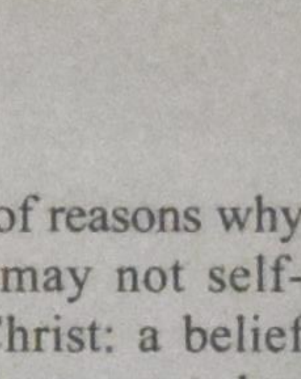
There are many issues where our faith and our science should dialogue, particularly in the neurosciences. Since neuroscience looks at our brain and what makes us human, it is a field that Christians should be attending to closely. We are image bearers, so our understanding about ourselves also informs our understanding of our God. Isolated Christians can work on these issues, but progress is often helped by constructive discussions. How do traditional Christian theological concepts map onto the knowledge we now have about our Lord's creation: what does sin mean? Conversely, there are Christian insights that need to be explored further: how does forgiveness change us on a psychological and neurological level?

Given the expansion of knowledge and the wonderful complexity of God's creation, we have to work together on these issues; no one individual can master them all. When I am unable to identify those who, like me, serve our risen Savior, then my ability –and theirs, too, I believe – to address these issues is impaired.

A dream

There may be a number of reasons why Christian neuroscientists may not self-identify as followers of Christ: a belief that science and faith can be separated; a fear that Christian groups are interested only in saving souls; bad science in some Christian communities; the possibility that they will get in trouble with their Christian community; and, perhaps, a fear that they will lose respect among their non-Christian associates. All of these are reflections of the brokenness of our lives and deserve more attention, but the loss they cause is very real.

When I go to the SfN meeting I will be like a child in our Lord's candy shop: full of awe and joy before the wonder of his creation. The very real effort of scientists (Christian and non-Christian alike) to understand our Creation and to try to heal some of the brokenness is something that should be supported and encouraged by all. But I dream of how much more exciting it would be if I could dance at this event with *all* of my fellow believers in attendance, a celebration of our image bearing.



Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is associate professor of psychology at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario.

Memoir of a Mixed-Up Garden

Curt Gesch

It's easy to criticize mono-culture, so I may as well indulge myself a little.

Large fields are the rule in prairie agriculture: corn fields, soybean fields, wheat fields. (I suspect the same is true of cotton fields and rice fields in more southerly climes.)

Probably every schoolchild has read somewhere or other that the strength of an ecosystem is often directly related to the diversity of species in that ecosystem.

When the large bison herds roamed the prairies, it was not just buffalo and grass. There were switch grasses, bluestems, "prairie wool." And forbs of all sorts with legumes following grasses. Prairie dog towns – the bane of horsemen, cattle ranchers, and quad drivers – were hard on grasses, but they encouraged deeper-rooted perennials.

Bison, which must have dreaded stampeding through prairie dog towns no less than South Dakota Angus cattle do, grazed their way along safely when walking through the honey-combed dog towns. They went on to a good dust wallow, creating bowls that caught snow-melt and became waterfowl habitat.

And if there were millions of bison (perhaps billions), in some places there were even more pronghorns. And prairie elk. And wolves, prairie grizzlies, foxes, coyotes, and badgers.

And then there were the birds, the insects, the actinomycetes, the other fungi, the bacteria, the nematodes, the arachnids.

Don't walk unaccompanied past these turnips.

What seemed simple to me as a boy – lots of bison and lots of grass – was actually a very complex system involving a huge diversity of wildlife species.

Reduce such a system to two kinds of grass (corn, wheat), two legumes (soybeans and alfalfa), and two restricted grazers (cows, horses), and things become very fragile indeed.

*****

Not so different, I propose, is a typical suburban yard or vegetable garden.

A nice lawn is an ideal still wished for by many North Americans. "Nice" means evenly green, trimmed edges, all grass. Maybe some bluegrass, and some fescue, but only a couple species at most. No clover.

To maintain this lawn, one would need herbicides, fertilizers, trimmers, and mowers. In cities where Round-Up, Killex (2,4,D) are illegal, alternate means of maintaining the nice lawn involves corn gluten meal, hand work, and various biological controls.

Greener-than-thou people turn part of their lawns into flower beds and vegetable gardens and try to do things organically. A healthy trend.

*****

Monocultures don't do much for a healthy suburban ecosystem, either, however. Organic, carefully-spaced marigolds, with a consistent amount of soil between plants, straight rows of cabbages or beans or carrots, and a carefully turned-over garden in September don't do much for living creatures either, with or without chemicals.

This year I decided to test a different way of seeding. I learned about it from Sepp Holtzer, an Austrian "agricultural rebel" to whose work I was introduced by my neighbour, Steffen Meyer.

Holtzer's farmland lies between 1000 metres and 1500 metres above sea level in the mountains near Graz, Austria. He grows orchard fruits, including some citrus, pumpkins, grain, vegetables, flowers – you name it – in areas that are clearly unsuitable (growing season too short, say agricultural experts). Holtzer has an elaborate "permacultural" theory which you can find via his United Kingdom distributor, but one aspect of his farming especially piqued my interest.

On the narrow terraces on his mountainside farm, Holtzer often plants mixed seeds. He mixes as many as thirty types of seeds in a bucket and then broadcasts them on the surface of bare soil. A kick of dirt now and then is all the covering the plants get. Holtzer's theory is a little different than what we call "companion planting" in North America. His is more like native American agriculture following the "three sisters": corn, pole beans, and squash, with corn supplying the pole beans with support, the beans producing nitrogen, and the squashing mulching the soil.

Holtzer wants a wide variety of root types: one that reaches deeply to bring up minerals, another that is shallow rooted, and so on. The theory made sense to me, but I wondered if I dared plant such a mixed-up mess in my garden. Would it become a patch of weeds, covering a scrawny radish here and there? And what would I tell visitors who asked, "What's growing there?"

I chose a patch of good garden soil about 1.5 metres by 4 metres in size. It was a patch of "clean soil," i.e., I had weeded it well during the past fifteen years. Then I found a bucket and mixed some seeds together: turnips, two kinds of radishes, leaf lettuce, ornamental kale, nasturtiums, dill, bush beans, wheat, sunflowers, and lavatera. I think I never pulled more than a couple weeds from the "SEPP" garden at any one time. First up were the wheat, radishes and turnips. They pretty well took care of the annual weeds. A tough lamb's-quarters or two managed to poke his head through the canopy, but was easy to remove.

One example of the mixed gardening approach.

Meanwhile, we enjoyed turning people's consternation ("What's growing there?") or even disapproval into delight. As I would babble on and on about Sepp Holtzer and his theories, Betsey would part the greenery and pull out a Raxe radish, point out an immense turnip, or grab a fresh bean or two to eat raw. As the season went on some of the radishes that we missed stuck up 3-foot flower stalks to compete with a few smaller sunflowers and the odd dill head. By the end of August we saw one nasturtium vining around turnips, seeking light, and a few pink lavatera.

The wheat never made it to maturity, looking more like pockets of lawn between vegetables and flowers. The bush beans were protected from an early frost, but had trouble maintaining themselves except on the edge of the garden; they never produced more than a few handfuls of beans.

But "parting the jungle" is still an adventure as I write this on September 5. Migrating juncoes and song sparrows love the Sepp Garden, too. A toad lives there, believing he is in heaven: one gulp and he has all the slugs for lunch that any toad would want or need. (The slugs don't seem to harm any of the plants, not that much of anything would attack a turnip on steroids.)

Mixed seeds. Diversity. Health. And quite a bit of delight, all based on one man's theory which is nothing more than following the plan of nature and nature's Maker.

Curt Gesch is a retired schoolteacher who gardens between frosts in central B.C.

Church

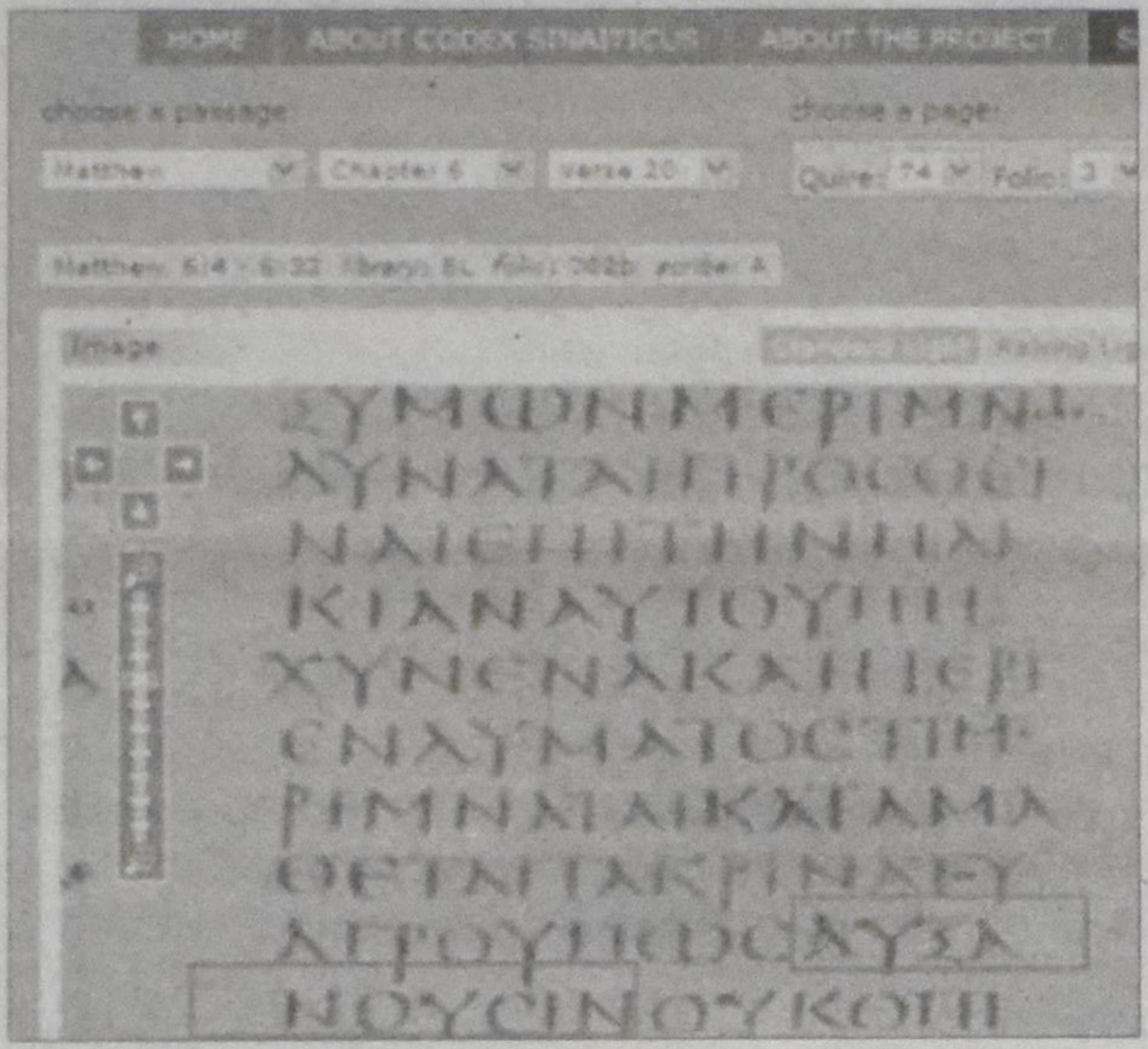
Fragment of world's oldest Bible found

MOUNT SINAI, Egypt (Catholic Culture/The Independent) – A British-based post-graduate student has uncovered a fragment of the world's oldest Bible hiding underneath the binding of an 18th-century book.

As Nikolas Sarris, 30, was trawling through photographs of manuscripts in the library of St. Catherine's Monastery he spotted a previously unseen section of the *Codex Sinaiticus*, which dates from about AD 350.

Handwritten in Greek on animal skin, the *Codex Sinaiticus* is the earliest known version of the Bible. The bulk of the *Codex* was discovered at the monastery in the nineteenth century. Although earlier fragments of the Bible are known, the *Codex Sinaiticus* is so significant because it is by far the most complete. The text discovered so far contains virtually all of the New Testament and about half of the Old Testament.

Leaves from the priceless tome are currently divided between four institutions, including St. Catherine's Monastery and the British Library, which has held the largest section of the ancient Bible since the Soviet Union sold its collection to Britain in 1933.



An example of the Codex Sinaiticus as seen online.

Academics from Britain, the U.S., Egypt and Russia collaborated to put the entire Codex online this year, but new fragments of the book are occasionally rediscovered. Sarris chanced upon the fragment as he inspected photographs of a series of book bindings that had been compiled by two monks at the monastery during the 18th century.

Over the centuries, antique parchment was often re-used in book bindings by St Catherine's monks because of its strength and the relative difficulty of finding fresh parchment in such a remote corner of the world.

Exciting moment

A Greek student conservator who is studying for his PhD in Britain, Sarris had been involved in the British Library's project to digitize the *Codex*. He recognized the distinct Greek lettering when he saw it poking through a section of a book binding. Speaking from the Greek island of Patmos on Sept. 1, Sarris said, "It was a really exciting moment. Although it is not my area of expertise, I had helped with the online project, so the *Codex* had been heavily imprinted in my memory. I began checking the height of the letters and the columns and quickly realized we were looking at an unseen part of the Codex."

The library in St Catherine's does not have the laboratory conditions needed to carefully peel away the binding without damaging the parchment underneath, but the library is undergoing renovations that might lead to the construction of a lab with the correct equipment to do

German Catholic leader: Luther made God central

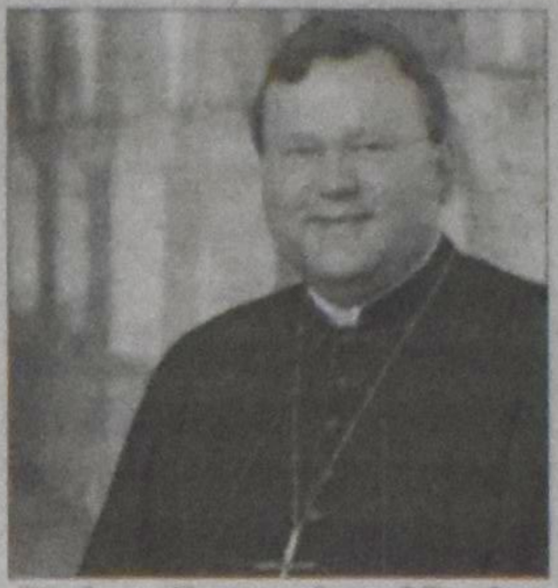
OSNABRÜCK, Germany – (ENI) The Roman Catholic bishop of Osnabrück in northern Germany says about Martin Luther, "It's fascinating just how radically he puts God at the centre." Because that's true, the 16th century Reformer is still offering a "positive challenge" to both the Catholic Church and Protestant churches, says Bishop Franz-Josef Bode.

Bode was interviewed by the German Protestant news agency epd in connection with a service at Osnabrück's Lutherkirche in early September, during which he preached on Luther.

Luther, said Bode, rightly denounced failures in the church and recalled the roots of faith. Bode described Luther as a "fascinating personality for both churches," noting that the Reformer had not intended to divide the church through the dissemination of his 95 Theses of 1517. Luther was more concerned in dealing with the fundamental question of how God turns towards human beings.

In the church of that era there were tendencies that contributed to "misunderstandings," said Bode, citing grace and the forgiveness of sins as things that certainly cannot be bought, in a reference to the practice at the time of the Catholic Church selling indulgences.

"The focus on Christ, the Bible and the authentic Word are things that we as the Catholic Church today can only underline," said Bode. He noted that especially with the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has been able to understand and address in a new way Luther's thought and his esteem for the Word of God.



Bishop Franz-Josef Bode.

The Second Vatican Council met from 1962 to 1965 and it led the Catholic Church to accept for the first time that there could be coexistence of different forms of faith in Christ, said the bishop. In 2015, the 50th anniversary of the council will take place within two years of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation of 2017. Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517.

Bode said he would work within the German (Catholic) Bishops' Conference to ensure that the ecumenical aspects of the Second Vatican Council are underlined. Still, he said, there remain elements of division between the Catholic Church and Luther. These divisions centre on the understanding that Luther developed from his own experience of the church, the priesthood and the sacraments.

The Catholic Church would, however, "today deal with such a provocation in a different and a better way," said the bishop.

Canadian students go 'Youth to Youth' in Africa with CRWRC

BURLINGTON, Ont (CRWRC) – Derek Drenth, 17, and Stephanie Dykstra, 19, both from Ontario, were among the six North American students who got to know six Ugandan students this past July in the "Youth to Youth" program sponsored by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

CRWRC acknowledges that culture can be a big barrier between people from very different places – unless God makes the introduction. "For anything like that to happen, God has to be involved," says Stephanie Dykstra, a student at Heritage College and Seminary in Cambridge, Ontario. "We all got along so well, and in a way that's not supposed to happen. We're from totally different cultures, and we think differently, but God put us together. He orchestrated the entire thing."

Youth to Youth is a cross-cultural and community development learning tour. The 12 young people spent four weeks in Uganda: one week in the capital city of Kampala and nearly three weeks in Kabale. The students also spent three days in Rwanda to learn more about the 1994 genocide.

"The most humbling thing was seeing the amount of forgiveness and reconciliation in Rwanda," says Derek Drenth of Dundas. "It is so incredible how far the country has come and it humbled me when I thought of my own lack of forgiveness in some areas."

Cultural differences diminished

Trekking to Rwanda and around Uganda for three weeks together helped squelch a lot of the preconceptions the students had before leaving home. "The culture difference was not as big as most people would expect, especially among youth," says Drenth. "This is more true of people who live in the cities, where there is a lot of Western influence, but even in more rural areas the people are not as different as one would expect."

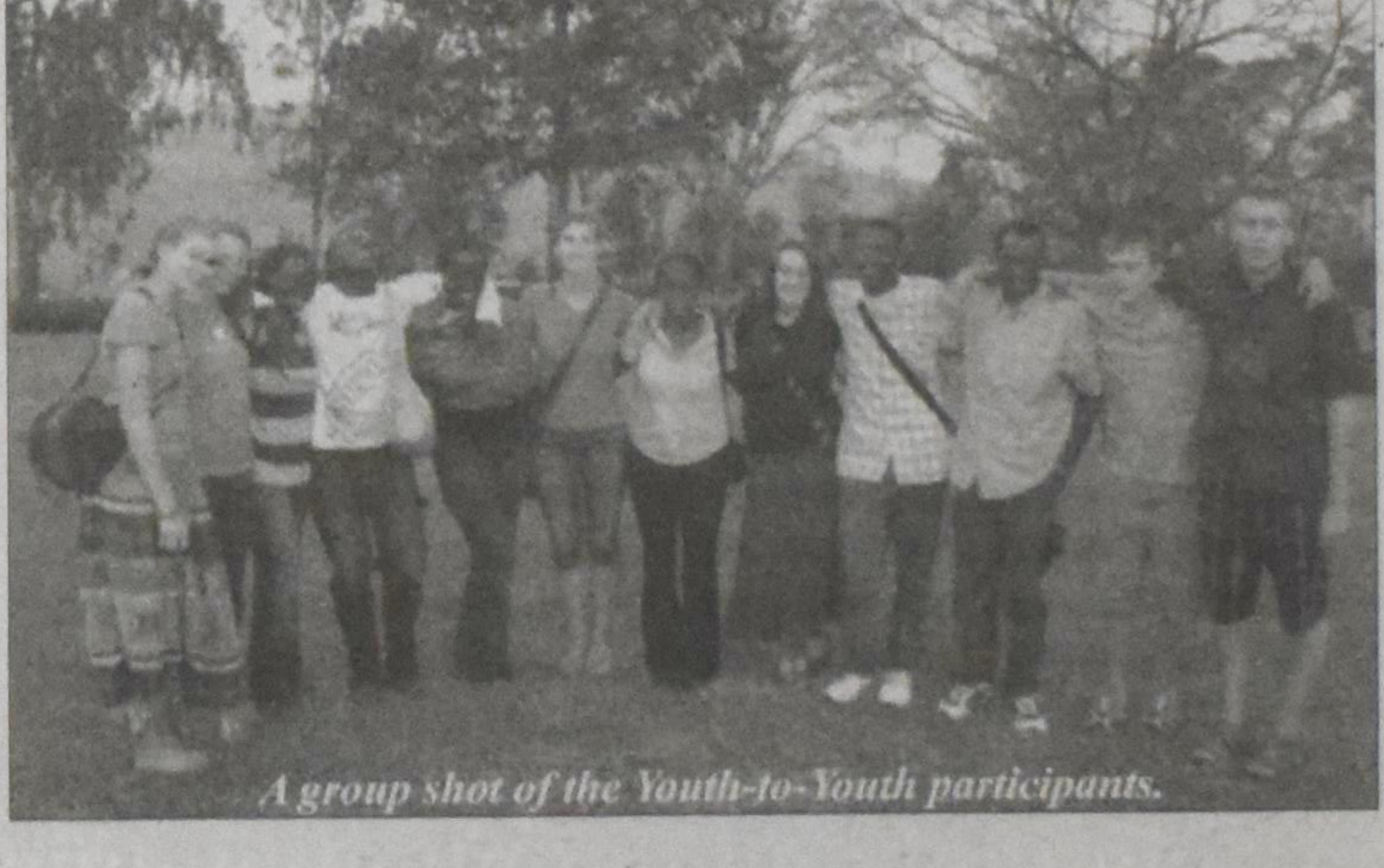
What Dykstra didn't expect, and was pleasantly surprised by, was the Ugandans' commitment to one another. "I don't understand how our country can't be more engrossed in our communities. It didn't matter [if people] were Christian or not. [The Ugandans] were just there to help [others]. They cared about their well being. That's what we're called to be: God's hands and feet."

The Ugandan approach, says Dykstra, may not be the North American way, but it should be. "The Ugandans say that that's one of their weaknesses, that they can't get as much done as they'd like to, but I think it's more a strength. Relationships are more important than events."

New friendships

Youth to Youth participants also had plenty of opportunities to meet kids their own age whose lives were much different than their own. Edson, 15, lives alone with HIV. "He was born with AIDS. He was very sick for awhile. When we met him he was getting stronger, and he wants to go back to school," says Dykstra, noting that the local church and CRWRC were helping Edson set up a beekeeping business to help pay school fees.

Dykstra left the trip with new friends and more personal concern for those living in poverty, yet she knew where to draw her comfort. "God brought us there, and God will do it again. You realize you're a very small person in that big plan. It's just cool that I got to be a part of it."



A group shot of the Youth-to-Youth participants.

Vatican: Education that ignores religion is a hindrance

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – In a letter to bishops' conferences around the world, the Vatican has said true religious education in schools is at risk of being replaced with a more "neutral" teaching about religious ethics and culture.

The result is confusion and indifference among students, whose faith can sometimes be put in danger, said the letter, issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education. "A form of education that ignores or marginalizes the moral and religious dimension of the person is a hindrance to full education," it said.

Dated May 5, the letter was posted on the congregation's website on September 9, just as most schools in Europe prepared to reopen. The text immediately ignited a debate in Italy over the proper balance between religious content and the secular nature of public schools.

The letter addressed the issue of the Catholic identity of church-run schools, but much of its attention was focused on religion classes in public schools. It said the nature and role of religious education in schools has become the object of debate.

"In some cases, it is now the object of new civil regulations, which tend to replace religious education with teaching about the religious phenomenon in a multidenominational sense, or about religious ethics and culture – even in a way that contrasts with the choices and educational aims that parents and the church intend for the formation of young people," it said.

'Neutrality' creates confusion

The letter warned that religious content in such classes can be downgraded to the point that students are led into error. "Moreover, if religious education is limited to a presentation of the different religions, in a comparative and 'neutral' way, it creates confusion or generates religious relativism or indifferentism," it said.

The letter quoted from a 1984 speech of Pope John Paul II, who strongly defended the rights of Catholics and other Christians to religious education in all schools, whether Catholic, Protestant or state-run.

"The families of believers have the right to such education; they must have the guarantee that the state school – precisely because it is open to all – not only will not put their children's faith in peril, but will rather complete their integral formation with appropriate religious education," the late pope said.

The letter insisted that religious instruction have an equal place with other subjects in the scholastic programs of schools. "It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge. It should not be an accessory alongside of these disciplines," the letter said.

In the United States, public schools can teach about religion as long as they do not provide religious training. A U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 1963 distinguished between teaching about religion, which it said was permissible, and state-sponsored religious indoctrination, which it prohibited. In Canada, the Catholic school system is supported by government funds, alongside the public school system.

The Vatican is demanding that religion have the status of a regular subject in Italian schools. The Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education expressed the view in a letter sent to the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) on September 9.

"It must show the Christian event with the same seriousness and depth by which other subjects present their knowledge," read the letter. "The specificity of this teaching, does not take away its nature of a school subject. It is necessary, therefore, that religious teaching at school appears as a school subject with the same demands of orderliness and rigour of other subjects."

The Vatican said that the teaching of different religions in schools across Italy could generate religious relativism and discouraged it because it could cause "confusion" or "damage."

"The marginalization of the teaching of religion in schools is equivalent, at least in practice, to assuming an ideological position that could lead to error, or cause severe damage to pupils," it said. "Furthermore, it could create confusion or generate religious indifference and relativism if the teaching of religion is limited to a neutral or comparative exposure of the various other religions."

Italy's public schools offer an optional "religion hour" in which students may study the Catholic religion or other faiths. However, under a 2007 ruling only students taking Catholicism were able to receive academic credit.

In mid-August, an Italian court ruling said that high school students may no longer receive academic credit for studying Catholicism, sparking criticism from conservative centre-right politicians, including the education minister, Mariastella Gelmini.

In the letter, the Vatican also asked for Italian parents to be allowed to choose a Catholic school as an alternative to a public school, thus ending what it called "any form of scholastic monopoly."

Texas debates amplifying U.S. history with Christianity

AUSTIN, Texas (Christian Post) – The Texas Board of Education is debating whether to modify its American history curriculum to acknowledge the influence that religion had on the founding of the United States. Supporters of amplifying the religious aspects of U.S. history in Texas public schools argue that it is simply telling the truth about the country's founding.

Peter Marshall, an evangelical minister and president of Peter Marshall Ministries, is one of six experts appointed by the Texas Board of Education to review the state's social studies curriculum. He says the "foremost problem" he sees with the current curriculum is that it does not give enough credit to the biblical motivations of America's settlers and founders. "Our children need to know the truth about how our country got started." He added, "You never read about how the founding fathers were nearly all Christian believers and that it is their biblical world view that shaped the way they thought and achieved what they did."

Other experts argue that students must understand that the religious faith of the country's founders was a big influence on the formation of the Constitution.

However, the American Humanist Association fought back with an open letter to the Texas State Board of Education on Thursday urging it not to rewrite the state's social studies curriculum in a way where the United States would be taught as having a Christian heritage. "A troubling trend has developed over the past few years by religious conservatives to revise history in order to portray the United States as a Christian nation," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, in a statement. "But the United States government is secular and our society is made up of people from all faiths and non-faith. It's dishonest and inaccurate to teach our kids anything else."

The current debate has attracted national attention in the U.S. because the decision of the Texas Board of Education is expected to affect school curriculums beyond the state of Texas. As the second largest school system in the nation, behind California, a decision to expand the role that religion played in U.S. history could affect the textbooks used by schools nationwide. Major textbook publishers would likely modify their books to reflect the wishes of one of their biggest clients.

Kids' author says Jesus is not God

LONDON, England (The Christian Institute) – A British atheist children's author will use his upcoming book to say that Jesus was not God. He claims that the Apostle Paul imagined the idea of Christ's divinity. In a new book entitled *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*, Philip Pullman says the idea of Jesus being God came from the "fervid imagination" of Paul.

Pullman is a strident atheist who has said his books aim at "killing God." Critics have described his work as "proselytising" for the atheist point of view.

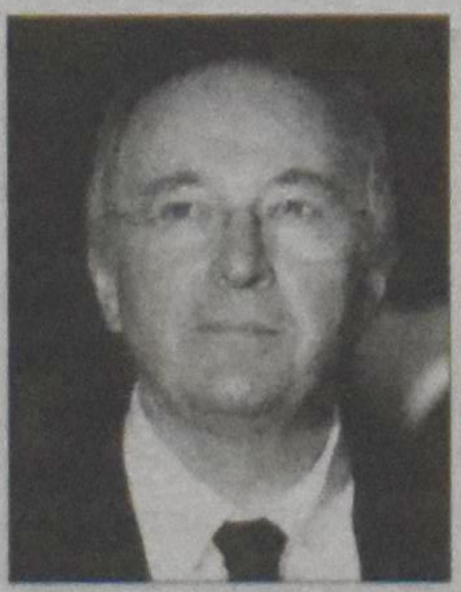
Commenting before the launch of the new book Pullman said, "For every man or woman who has been led to goodness by a church, and I know there have been many, there has been another who has been inspired by the same church to a rancid and fanatical bigotry for which the only fitting word is evil."

Pullman described Paul as "a literary and imaginative genius who has had more influence on the world than anybody else, including Jesus. He had this great ability to persuade others and his rhetorical skills have been convincing people for 2,000 years." He added, "By the time the Gospels were written down, Paul had already begun to transform the story of Jesus into something altogether different and extraordinary."

The book is due to be published around Easter next year.

Takes the church seriously?

In 2007, the first of three planned series of film adaptations of Pullman's novels was released. The first film sparked considerable controversy and after low box office ratings, plans for a sequel were dropped.



Philip Pullman

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said Philip Pullman's books are among his favorites. Dr. Rowan Williams said he liked Pullman's work because he took the church "seriously" at a time when it appeared to be "drifting out" of mainstream intellectual debate.

The Association of Christian Teachers' Chief Executive, Rupert Kaye said of the trilogy, "My key concern is that many young people (and adults) who read Philip Pullman's trilogy will be left with an extremely distorted understanding of what Christians actually believe and what the Bible really says about the person of God."

Tony Watkins, an evangelical media commentator said, "The trouble is, he blurs the line between fantasy and reality by giving interviews and talking about the Republic of Heaven in the world. And because he's got all of this anti-God rhetoric in the real world that is even stronger than what's in the book, I think he can't get away with saying, 'It's just a story and you can read into it whatever you like.' Because he does understand what he's saying."

Columnist Melanie McDonagh warned about *His Dark Materials*, Pullman's trilogy, saying it was "actually setting up a parody of Christianity as a thing itself."

"Now, that's fair enough as Mr Philip Pullman's own belief but I think it is something that readers should be alerted to because it is a proselytizing agenda," she added.

Peacemaking

The Cross on My Fence

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

A cross hangs on my wooden fence beside the purple-blue clematis and above the pink astilbe and yellow lilies. I hung it there on the day our neighbors moved away.

I had always loved gardening until our relationship with them soured. Initially, the single mother of a girl and teenage boy had been amiable with all the neighbors, including my family. Her daughter had often played with my daughter, as well as with the other kids on the street. Soon, however, I noticed a pattern emerging. Whenever her daughter didn't get her way, she quietly bullied the other children. The relationship between her daughter and the other kids deteriorated.

I wondered where this girl had learned such behavior. I soon found out. Her mother threatened one of the children, and then turned against the child's parents, as well. Awhile later, she turned against the children in another family.

Because I had tried to establish a friendship with her, I didn't expect her to turn against me. I was wrong. One autumn day as my daughter raked leaves, I noticed that she was very sad. When I asked her what was wrong, she explained that our neighbor had gotten angry – my daughter had let leaves fall on her driveway. I went to her and asked what the problem was. She turned on me vehemently, hatred on her face. After telling me that all the neighbors were gossiping about me, she told me to leave them alone even though I had offered to try to resolve the problem. As I turned to go, she snarled, "And you call yourself a Christian!"

Kicked out of the garden?

Gardening was no longer a relaxing, spiritually uplifting time. Instead, hoeing the soil, distributing manure, watering the plants and trimming the bushes became a knot-in-my-stomach time. Determined not to be banished from my garden by fear of the woman's rage, I prayed for God to give me the grace to love those who hated me, and to pray for those who despised him. Some days I felt like I was winning. Many days I sensed that I was losing.

Still, I gardened.

For five years I prayed for deliverance from this woman who refused reconciliation. Right or wrong, I prayed for God to move her and her children out of our neighborhood. Sometimes I waited patiently, submitting to God's law of love by praying for their salvation and longing for a restored relationship. At other times, I chafed under God's timing.

One day I saw the For Sale sign on their lawn and I knew that God had heard my pleas.

A violent symbol of peace

Because I am a person who finds symbolism meaningful, I asked God to show me a symbol of freedom that I could place in my garden on the day when the family moved away. I discovered the cross while cleaning out one of my closets. Instantly, I knew that it was the symbol I had been praying for because of its distinctive character. Hands are carved on it. At the top, one hand reaches down, symbolizing God's love reaching down to us. Below the cross's central beam, four hands reach up to heaven. On its horizontal board, hands reach out in both directions, as if reaching out into the world with Christ's love. At the center of the cross, a dove intersects all the hands, a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence in the world.

The cross is weathered now, no longer brand-new. But hands reaching down, up, and across, intersected by the dove are still clearly visible, just as God's mysterious grace is lucidly evident everywhere, in gardens and homes, in churches and hospitals, on city streets and country lanes, and in war zones and peaceful lands.

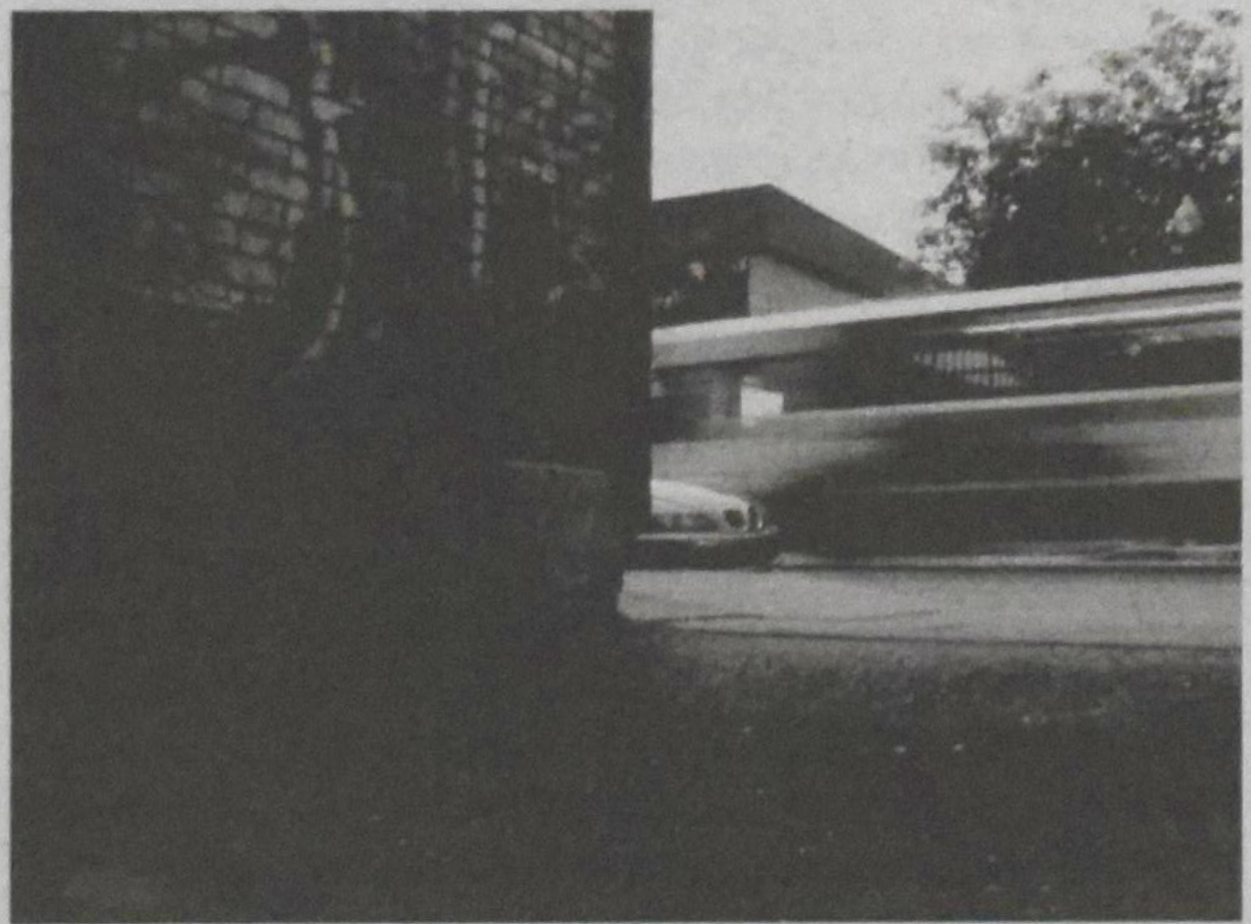
Sonya VanderVeen Feddema is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, ON. She has recently published her first children's picture book, Monzi and Mama's Stories, copies of which can be ordered at sonyavf55@hotmail.com

Thirty-two cents

Hendrik Vlaar

The other day I was biking my unemployed self towards Old Québec to look for "help wanted" signs. Halfway through my journey I saw an old man asking people for money, but he was ignored by everyone who passed him by. I always give to those in need, so I walked across the street (I felt like the Samaritan) and got out my change. But the man stopped me before I could hand him any money and said something in heavily accented French, which I didn't understand. I had to ask him to speak simply. He responded to me in English, saying, "I am asking for thirty-two cents so I can buy milk."

"Thirty-two cents?" I thought, as I proceeded to reach for the small coins, "Just thirty-two cents? I would never miss such a small amount of money!" I couldn't believe that people had had the gall to pass by a disheveled looking old man asking specifically for no more than he needed. What if that had been their own father? Would they treat him so harshly?



The streetcorner where the incident took place.

'When did we see you hungry?'

As you can imagine, I gave the man the money and made my thoughts known as I expressed my frustration at people's ignorance. And then something totally unnerving happened. We locked eyes, and it seemed as if the both of us could feel strong emotions of mutual love and understanding channeling between us. Caught up in the moment, we simultaneously reached out to form the most meaningful of embraces. In all my memory, I've never had an act of intimacy with a stranger possess such great significance. Yet at the time I felt like I knew him dearly, even more so than my own grandfathers.

And who knows, maybe that's what Christ meant when he said that when we serve those in need we serve Christ as well. But is it really possible to think of the poor in that manner? Can we really imagine our Lord – the One at whom the whole earth trembles with fear – to be behind the eyes of the addict, the murderer or the hungry? Or, even more far-fetched, how ridiculous would it look to see the naked crowned with the highest and most bejeweled of crowns, with all the nations bowing down before him in honour and reverence? Is that, really, what Christ is asking us to imagine? I will avoid making the mistake of delving into speculation – besides, the question is better answered by the reader in the presence of her God.

Trapped in their misery

So that's my story. For all those times I've given spare change to open hands and felt my money doing nothing but feeding bad habits, that one moment made it all worth the while. For in that embrace I was truly humbled and changed, leaving with tears in my eyes and a fire in my heart. I hazard to think that the rest of society could benefit from such an encounter.

With such a story in mind, is it fair to ever think of the poor as such a great burden on our developing society? Should we harden ourselves to their misery and scoff at their misfortune? Indeed, the rich and powerful never seem to care for anyone but their own selves. But such a hardening of hearts forms, truly, the most miserable of creatures. Sadly, many are trapped in their misery, and seek to treat their deep and painful wounds as an injured person without a doctor, self-administering slipshod treatment to the kinds of injuries that require complex operations and skilled, patient hands.

Well, my friends, I suggest an alternative. Instead of trying, endlessly, to treat our wounds of regret with the empty-promises of self help, or worse, self absorption, perhaps we can find ways to help each other. If we truly want to experience great healing, then we need to find the Great Healer. How better can we show each other the way than through our little acts of sympathy and kindness – thirty-two cents at a time.

Hendrik Vlaar (hendrik.vlaar@gmail.com) is a student, activist, and part-time writer going into his final year at Redeemer University College.

Our Christian call to be peacemakers

Brad Close

Long enough have I been dwelling with those who hate shalom. I am for shalom, but when I speak, they are for fighting.

Psalm 120:6-7

Every day, media outlets reveal humanity's willingness to fight. The mechanisms of war and human violence are often put forward as a means to an end. We're told that we must go to war if we want to see peace. It's said that armed conflict is inevitable if we want to see true development work happen around the world. Really? Is it true that we must have military solutions to the problems we face in the world?

The difficulty with this view is that war and violence often play a false role in history. They parade as the true way to liberate people from oppression and to bring a sense of security. But the hard truth to which the history of civilization attests is that violence begets the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, violence multiplies evil. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction."

In contrast, God's vision for shalom is centered on humility, compassion, and mercy. It involves the human acts of making amends, peacemaking, restoration and living in harmony. Shalom is a movement toward fullness and completeness and encapsulates a vision of wholeness for the individual, within societal relations and for the whole of creation.

Speak a word of peace

I was overjoyed when I read that Synod 2006 of the Christian Reformed Church adopted a comprehensive report by the synodical Committee to Study War and Peace. That report encourages all Christ-followers to follow the gospel's call to "speak a word of peace" and to become "agents of shalom in a broken world."

The report also sets out steps by which we should approach this vital task. We are to urge congregations and individuals to "discuss and prayerfully reflect on their Christian responsibility to be peacemakers." We are to participate "actively in building cultures of peace at all levels of society ... for example, participating in government and the political process, supporting nonviolent conflict resolution, strengthening respect for human rights, and opposing increasing militarization and other tendencies when they threaten peace and justice." And we are to call on all branches of the Christian church "to promote and actively engage in international initiatives for building peace with justice."

I offer the following reflections in light of our Christian calling to be agents of shalom in a broken world.

Peace through the lens of Scripture

When we encounter the story of the Messiah Jesus we are shocked to discover that in a world where humans try to establish peace by making war, God sends his Son to live a peaceable life, to die by the violence of the cross and under the weight of sin, and to rise in newness of life.

God has triumphed over the power of evil (which is manifest in our persons, societies, politics, etc.) and reconciled creation to himself through the violence of the cross. Through the blood of Jesus' cross, God exhausts the force of evil, God shares the suffering of humanity, God gives us life, and God establishes peace in the world.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you," says Jesus (John 14.27). Shalom is the divine gift offered to all people. And peacemaking is our holy obligation.

As followers of Jesus, it's our responsibility to "make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy" (Hebrews 12.14). In the power of the Holy Spirit, God summons all believers to follow Jesus as we choose love over power, the cross over control, peace over revolt.

The vocation of every Christian is to be a peacemaker. "Nobody can be a Christian without being a peacemaker.... What we are called to is a life of peacemaking in which all that we do, say, think or dream is part of our concern to bring peace to our world. Just as Jesus' command to love one another cannot be seen as a part-time obligation, but requires our total investment and dedication, so too Jesus' call to peacemaking is unconditional, unlimited and uncompromising" (Henri Nouwen, Peacework, 16-17).

> "Peace demands the most heroic labor and the most difficult sacrifice. It demands greater heroism than war. It demands greater fidelity to the truth and a much more perfect purity of conscience" – Thomas Merton

The Canadian Department of Peace Initiative

As a follower of Jesus who takes seriously his call to be an agent of shalom in a broken world, I introduce a grassroots movement in Canada called the Canadian Department of Peace Initiative (CDPI). (More information is available at www.departmentofpeace.ca.)

The CDPI is a campaign underway in Canada calling for the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Peace (a similar movement is underway in the US called Americans for the Department of Peace). While Canada, along with many Western nations, has many departments carrying out peace-related activity, this work is fragmented and has no authority to influence key decisions. Current priorities and institutions do not speak to the needs of a culture of peace. This must change!

The Minister of Peace in a Canadian Department of Peace would be a voice in Cabinet who could fundamentally alter the nature of debate and decision-making toward peace and non-violence on both domestic and global issues.

The Minister would speak for millions of average citizens who long to see a return to Canada's traditional and necessary roles of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace-building in domestic and international affairs.

Human and economic rights would be advanced, as well as issues of restorative justice related to women, youth, aboriginal and First Nations peoples. There can be no peace when people are being discriminated against, cheated, deprived or abused.

The CDPI would work for the elimination of nuclear weapons and encourage global reductions in conventional weapons. Reports would be made to Parliament on the sale of arms and their effect on peace (Canada is now the sixth largest arms dealer in the world, while the US is by far the top arms exporter on the planet).

The CDPI would create a Civilian Peace Service trained in nonviolent conflict transformation. This would provide alternatives to military action in volatile situations. A peace curriculum would be developed for all educational levels. And increased support would be given to university/college-level peace studies.

This is a very hopeful picture. But where does the church stand in all of this?

The Church's responsibility

All disciples of Jesus agree that we both worship the Prince of Peace and are called to be a people of shalom. God implores us, "Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14; 1 Peter 3:11). Peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). And Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

God is the source of lasting peace. A relationship with Jesus is the only path to perfect peace. And, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, we are called to pray and to work for peace.

In light of Scripture's teaching we discover that peacemaking, like war, is waged. It is an act that involves the formation of an alternative consciousness, an alternative imagination. Peacemaking is deliberate and is rooted in grace. It takes the initiative in settling disputes. It involves the demand to love, feed and forgive enemies.

And yet, we Christians so often neglect our vocation to be peacemakers. We avoid or

Campaign to Establish a Canadian
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION by PEACEFUL MEANS

suppress the violence in our own hearts. We become numb and calloused to the world's pain. We fall prey to the twin evils of cynicism and apathy.

In light of this tension, we ought to join the lament of Henri Nouwen: "Out of the depths of our being, we cry to God for peace. Out of that fearful place where we have to confess that we too are part of the destruction against which we are protesting.... Out of that empty spot of silence where we feel helpless, embarrassed, and powerless, where we suffer from our own impotence to stop the reign of death in our world ... we cry to the Lord and say: 'Lord have mercy'" (The Road to Peace).

The same grace that brings us salvation impels us to face our fears and insecurities and to work for God's shalom. The shape this takes will vary from person to person. But what remains the same is our common vocation to be agents of shalom in a broken world.

Thus, it's my prayer that our vocation to be peacemakers will lead us to develop cultures of peace and to see Departments of Peace take shape in our governments. In the name of the Prince of Peace, I entreat all Christians to take up this mantra!

Brad Close (brad.close@dal.ca) is the Christian Reformed Church of North America Campus Minister at Dalhousie University in Halifax, NS.

Leendert Kooij and the OCMA choir, Quartet and Brass do a
BENEFIT CONCERTS for EUROVANGELISM
October 17 7:30 p.m.
Hebron CRC,
4240 Anderson St. Whitby
October 24 7:30 p.m.
St. George's Anglican Church,
99 Woolwich St, Guelph,
See http://eurovangelism.ca

Joy and Sorrow

Speak – Write
Paula Warkentin

Writer's block and butterflies

Saturday, May 17, 2008. 11:44 a.m.
Dear God,

Thank you for Micah. I walked to the corner store and thought of you, Micah. How the last time your daddy and I were there, the cashier behind the counter looked at us with a questioned smile and asked, "baby?" and we hadn't even told him about you. I miss you Micah. I miss the way you made my skin smell, the way you made me feel, see and hear. And I miss the way you made your daddy sing and pray over my tummy. This morning, the song on my heart is one that was ringing earlier this week when the loss of you still felt so sudden. "How Can I Stop From Praising Your Name?" I thank God (Your Heavenly Papa) with whom you are present, (for that)... for this and for the gift of having you.

Love Mummy.
...I am crying still.

Today, the words of that journal entry feel far away, even though I can vividly recall the grip of my fingers holding the pen to write them down. This miscarriage had marked another disappointment, a significant loss, and re-entry to a fresh encounter with grief. I was trying not to lose sight of what I was experiencing, even though the last thing I wanted to do was feel, let alone write. Micah's death was like a form of punctuation that did not have a name. Somehow his departure had come and brought with it a resistance for me to express myself with words.

Inner rage

Journaling, though challenging, was easier. It brought release, equivalent to taking shallow breaths in the deep end of a swimming pool. When encouraged by my husband to write without thinking and without trying to formulate meaningful thoughts, I was immediately paralyzed. What was this fear about and where was it coming from? It suddenly occurred to me, that I was afraid to write because I was terrified of what might come through the tip of my pen, if I were to fully express myself. After all, how does one explode black ink on white paper and not cause a noticeable mess? How could I allow others to read what I felt, and not reveal the sting of death raging inside me? At times, I wondered if the sense of ache I experienced was even noteworthy. I wondered if I even had a reservoir of vocabulary to adequately express this well of loss? Could I write the truth and not cry, when what I wanted to do was scream and holler for miles until forever? Could I stand to hear the sound of this place called a mother's heart break open again and survive the echo of my own words, wailing?

The truth is, I was not sure. For a long time, I did not take the chance. I was scared to see my insides made visible and known. I didn't want to offend the paper on which I was writing, nor the eyes of anyone who might read my words. Much like my experience with grieving, sentences did not come easy. They did not flow, nor start and stop with any rhyme or reason. The only cadence I heard spelled death. Since by this time I had no tolerance for anything that remotely resembled loss, including the natural ease and confidence with which I could no longer write, I abandoned my pen to the grave – in resignation to the life I once felt as I writer, until recently.

I unfortunately don't have a formula nor landmark of an event that took place enabling me to pick up my pen again. It happened over time, with God, the help of my husband, family and close friends – people who cared to confront and challenge me to press through the fear of not knowing what to say nor how to say it. And today, I am able to write again (not just because this article is due), but because I am no longer afraid to feel; nor have my emotions made visible and known.

Anticipation today

In a recent response to a friend, who asked me what it feels like when the baby moves inside my womb, I wrote these words. *It's kind of weird, only because it's not like anything I expected. I thought movement would feel the way that (I) experience movement, large and obvious. But our baby's initial movements are just that ... initial, in the beginning stages, like little waves making themselves known to the outside world. So, it feels like butterflies, the wings of a butterfly fluttering just under the skin of my belly. Now that it's begun, it is something I look forward to feeling. It is not constant. It comes and goes every 1-2 hours throughout the day.*

Yesterday, I had an outburst of energy and cleaned the house with much vigor. After that, I wasn't feeling our baby move for hours. It immediately made me nervous. Fortunately by the time I went to sleep, I felt fluttering, but I was fully aware that I wanted a Doppler so I could hear our baby's heart beat and make sure everything was alright. There is still hesitance at times, that has a place of reserve for "just in case," that I wish did not exist. So I ask for prayer, regarding that. I need to trust God, period, knowing that he created this little one and he will take care of Kenny, me and our baby. (He has promised to perfect the things that concern me and not forsake the work of his own hands.) Oh boy, and the tears fill my eyes. It is still a raw and tender place in my heart. A place that in the midst of this thing called pure joy, in anticipation of what this new little life will look like, smell like, smile, and cry like ... what it will be like the first time we gaze into each other's eyes, the first yawn and stretch, the first poop, the first burp and the sound of wailing as it exits my womb and enters this world, which I cannot even begin to imagine and yet long for....

In the midst of all that ... tears stream down my face, picturing myself saying to our new baby, you have siblings who have come and gone before you, who are with The Father and they love you. So, it's been a wave of emotions for me, in the midst of this journey, though restorative.

Monday, August 24, 2009. 11:22 am. (Week 22)
Dear God, Thank you for today, for the life of each one of our children. The ones (who) though no longer here, are with YOU, and for the one who is growing inside of me because, YOU are LORD. Love, Your daughter, Paula.

Paula (pencil.pen.and.paper@hotmail.com) is a poet, writer, lover of outcasts and wife of Kenny Warkentin. They live in Winnipeg.

Bienke's story (part VII)

This is part seven of the life of Jacobina Wilhelmina Radsma, née Vlaar, as told to her daughter Marion. The series will continue in following issues.

Bienke, Adam and girls spring 1951

When she finally arrived after nine months of anticipation and planning, she waited until five a.m to finally appear – healthy, perfect and big, weighing in at nine pounds. Only someone who has given birth to a child herself will be able to understand the deep and complicated gladness I felt as a mother holding my new baby in my arms. Marion was the first of five births for me – and I experienced that same joy with each new infant. Whether it is one's first or fifth, the emotions that rush through one's veins are so overwhelming that one almost faints. So many things flooded through me at once – the relief that I didn't have to carry that package anymore, that my pain was over and I had a warm and sleepy child in my arms; joy that I could hug and kiss my daughter to my heart's content; inexpressible gratitude that I could look my baby in the eye (if she'd only open them and look back at me) and say, "Sweetheart, here you are, so unbelievably perfect, ten fingers and ten toes.... What a gift God has given us, what a responsibility." And the next morning I'd continue, "Good morning, my child, are you ready for some breakfast?" It's a one-sided conversation, true, but then I never got any back-talk either, just as well! Named after her father's mother, Johanna Maria was baptized in Haarlem's Wilhelmina Church two weeks later.

Twenty-one months after Marion, on July 24th, 1950, our second daughter was born. With lots of dark hair and a deep tan, the doctor commented that she seemed already to have spent time on the beach! Naming her for my father Arien, we called her Ariena, Rini for short. Two weeks after her birth she was baptized in the same church as her sister. We were delighted to have our two little girls, what a blessing, a perfect little family.

Opa moves in

Adam's father, Frans, whom we later called Opa Radsma, moved in with us when Rini was only a couple of months old. His wife had died of pancreatic cancer a couple of years earlier and he was alone. His older son was married and his two younger daughters were caught up in building careers of their own. We asked him to live with us. He stayed with us; a welcome and much loved part of the family until he succumbed to cancer in the St. Catharines sanatorium when Rini was 17.

Even though I was now a young mother, my family still made me feel beautiful. Soon after Rini was born, I remember buying myself a chic little black suit – a straight, calf-length skirt with a crisp white blouse and a classically fitted jacket. One Sunday, as I was putting on my matching little black and white hat to go to church with my father-in-law (women could not attend church with uncovered hair in the early 50's!), he suddenly turned to me and said, "I am so proud to walk beside you – you are such a beautiful lady!" And again, when we were walking home together from the service he repeated his compliments: "After church, I saw you talking with other people and you looked so good. I felt so proud to have you as my daughter-in-law." That was a wonderful boost to my ego, I can tell you! My husband had stayed home from church that morning to be with our two children; our church did not offer babysitting during those days.

It was a very secure feeling to know that I was cherished so deeply. I remember another time when I went out with the children's two grandfathers while Adam, who was a successful insurance agent, caught up with his administrative work in the afternoon at home. Usually he would be with the children and I could take my bicycle to the market which was held outdoors every Monday in the middle

Creation precedes redemption

The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. I Cor. 15:46

A. A. Van Ruler

In previous chapters Paul spoke about the spiritual and the natural body. The natural body is the human being as created in Adam, whereas the spiritual body is the one recreated in Christ, the resurrected Lord.

Evidently, the apostle thinks that there might be a misunderstanding that should be prevented. There is a certain urgency in his tone. The apostle warns us that one should not reverse the order of things here. The spiritual body really does not come first, but the natural. Of course, we cannot say with certainty what has led Paul to this rather sudden and forceful reaction. But it could be that he is thinking of a certain philosophy that we hear about today as well, albeit in a different form. This philosophy says that there are two different worlds and a dichotomy between the natural and the spiritual, and, of course, the spiritual is much higher than the natural. It is the real thing, the only worthwhile thing and the origin of all other things. The natural followed later and can only be explained as a sort of fall. Anyway, it is lower and actually evil itself.

Two opposing principles?

This is a rather likely way of thinking. When we look at ourselves and we see the two opposing principles of the natural and the spiritual, and if we then look at the world with its ocean of sorrow and vanity, then we arrive willy-nilly at the thought that the world as it is must be explained on the basis of what is natural. What's more, that the natural must be explained on the basis of its opposition to the spiritual, and that mankind, in its desire to at least have *some* foundation, is forced to assume that the spiritual is the only original, the only real thing.

This way of thinking, of course, involves a relinquishing of the world since it is inferior. At least we will have the nice feeling that the inner person is somewhat participating in the spiritual world. One must also let go of the world in order to return to true *being.*

It is worthy of note that the apostle reacts so strongly to this idea. He forcefully rejects this semi-profound notion. He says *This way, you turn everything upside down and do harm to the best part of your faith.* Such despising of the natural is inappropriate and evil. Evil, because it originated in the will of mankind. The man himself has called evil into being.

Wanted and called into being

However, that does not condemn mankind as creature. The natural is not swallowed up in evil, because natural mankind is still God's creature, and we may not despise it for that reason. Any attempt to minimize the natural amounts to being ungrateful to the Creator. There is even God-displeasing profanity in saying that the natural is only evil. Paul says it was *first.*

... being created is being real

By that he means that the natural life is lived in full reality; being created is being real. The natural body and natural life is fully a gift of God.

Also today we really need this reminder. In our day the world has once again become constrictive resulting in a tendency on our part to find something laughable, nonsensical and even nauseating in our existence. This is a deep profanity according to the apostolic gospel. That natural existence, given to us, came first. We can't escape that one. How ever much we complain and wail about it, we are God's creatures, wanted and called into being by him.

Keep it real

But there must have been a second point that Paul wanted to stress: you have to keep Christ and his resurrection in history.

If you are so cocksure of yourself to readily assume that the spiritual is first and original and the only real thing, then you are putting it outside of our reality. You are making of it something mythical, and you are placing it in the "arch-beginning". Or else, you are changing it into an idea only and allowing it to levitate above history. In either case you are trying to say that there is a better world out there that we experience and as spiritual beings we can relate to it. Let us try to return to that and leave this world of woe.

All that is impossible, says Paul, because there is only one world and that is the one we experience. It is God's world in which he has acted and in which he is still busy. He has created it and given it a natural body. After that he has re-created it and given it a spiritual body. The latter he did in the person and the work of Christ and especially in his resurrection. That is reality in this world. Christ's resurrection is a historical and physical fact.

The natural is first *and* divine, that is to say belonging to God. The spiritual came after, in a way *infused* into the natural. The natural was the shop floor on which the spiritual could be realized.

That means as well that in the spiritual the natural could be redeemed and re-created. We, who really have a natural body – we, who are in Adam – are really redeemed in Christ. In him we receive, and we *are,* a spiritual body.

This is no minor matter: This is the apostolic gospel and the ground structure of the Christian faith. Now we know why Paul reacts so strongly to that idea of the order of the natural and the spiritual.

Meaning in the inbetween

There is a third aspect to this all. The natural is first, and it is good even though evil rose out of it. After that the spiritual came to redeem the natural and to conquer evil in all its forms. The second, in a way, is therefore more than the first. The end is greater than the beginning. The kingdom of glory is higher than the creation.

There is therefore *meaning* in what is between the beginning and the end, i.e., human history. Evil is, in a sense, turned inside out and will be finally and completely conquered.

This deep conviction that the historical process has meaning is uniquely characteristic of the Christian faith, but one gets the impression nowadays that it is only communism that still believes in that process … to Christendom's shame. [*Translator's note: Van Ruler wrote this before World War 2. Today he would probably have pointed to Islam and not to communism.*]

The Old Testament and the apostolic gospel have brought this deep conviction into the world. Augustine and Hegel lived out of that knowledge. It is the first task of the Christian church in our time forcefully to proclaim this truth: *History has meaning. The world goes forward, not backward. The end will be much better than the beginning.*

Translated by Bram Hoff of St. Catharines, Ontario

Bienke's story

....continued from p. 12

of the Haarlem city square, right in front of the St. Bavo. The St. Bavo was a very big church with a carillon that would play every fifteen minutes. I loved going there; it was a very special atmosphere. This time we walked – the square was a pleasant walk of perhaps half an hour from where we lived. I took the baby buggy – Marion was 2½ years old and Rini about six months. Rini was always happy going for a ride and Marion liked to walk. Whenever she got tired, she could just climb aboard Rini's carriage and rest for a while because we had fitted a small board over the end of the buggy as a little emergency sitting place for her. My father, who was also alone since my mother had passed away a couple of years before, happened to be visiting us that day. The two older gentlemen were chatting comfortably as they followed me to the market. I was not paying much attention to their conversation, but suddenly I heard my name so my ears perked up. My dad said, "Yes, she is my Bienke." My father-in-law responded, "She is my Bienke, too." And my father came back with, "But she is flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood." Then Father Radsma replied, "Her children are my flesh and blood, just as much as yours!" Have you ever heard two elderly men fight over the mother of their grandchildren? In one way, it was very funny – but at the same time it gave me a wonderful feeling of being loved!

Leaving home

When we were 32 and had been married for eight years, my brother Tony, one of four of my brothers who had left home to establish themselves in Canada, delighted us by coming for a visit with a friend. Although Tony neither recommended nor criticized Canada we decided that our future too lay in Canada. Marion was five years old at the time; Rini was almost four.

We did not undertake this adventure alone, however; we had support from both sides of the family. From Adam's side Opa Radsma as well as Jeltje Adam's baby sister joined us in our trek to a new country. That left only his sister Marjo in Holland, because his older brother Tjeerd (Ted) had immigrated to Canada two years before. From my side came my newly-wed younger brother Joop (Joe) and his wife Jannie who had married just a month before the journey. We had planned this all together.

We all traveled together on "De Grote Beer," a wartime merchant ship converted to this new use after the war. Adam was fine throughout the boat trip and Rini had lots of fun onboard; she even celebrated her fourth birthday on the ship. Marion, however, did not do quite as well and the boat's motion made me nauseous for nine straight days. One morning, I woke up from a restless sleep on the ship, gratefully wondering why I suddenly felt so much better. The answer was obvious once I climbed up on deck and saw that the ship lay quietly in the Halifax harbour. What a blessing to see land at last; a little later, the Canadian authorities even gave us the opportunity to wander around on solid ground for a couple of hours. What a good feeling it was to be walking on land again!

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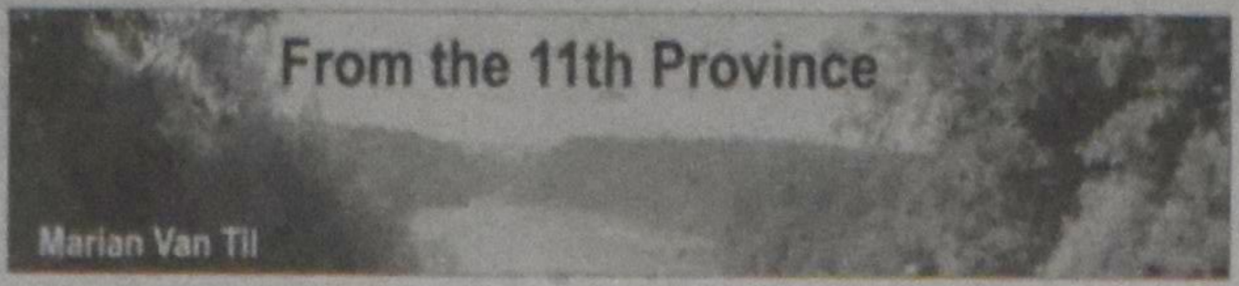

The U.S. government, healthcare and the poor

How do biblical admonitions to personal, familial and churchly deeds of compassion toward the poor intersect with a nation's promotion of social justice? I've been thinking about that, partly spurred by the less than harmonious healthcare debate in the U.S.

Since God established the universe in accordance with his Word and will, we Reformed Christians stress that there are biblical principles that apply to all of life and every subject under the sun. Often those principles are obvious. Then again, they must be uncovered, interpreting Scripture with Scripture. I see such principles relating to the healthcare debate: the just treatment of the poor and good stewardship. How these principles apply is the question.

If we oppress the poor we show contempt for God (Prov. 14:31). We are not to be hardhearted or tightfisted with brothers and sisters in need (Deut. 5:7). How does that inform a government's operations? The complex debate in the U.S. boils down to strong differences on two main issues: to what extent is it the *government's* task to require that everyone have health coverage; to what extent should working taxpayers be required to pay for that care and become indebted on behalf of the entire country?

An important aside: everyone living in the U.S. *does* have access to healthcare; it is unlawful for anyone to be refused treatment because of inability to pay for it. But that means that the working poor and the jobless (health insurance originates in one's job) get their healthcare via emergency room treatment at hospitals. That raises costs and insurance premiums for those who pay. (Among the 330 million Americans the real number who cannot afford health insurance is estimated to be between eight and 10 million. The 45-47 million figure of uninsured often referred to includes millions who could buy insurance but have opted not to; and some 12 million, non-tax-paying illegal aliens as well.)

"To whom much is given, much will be required," God warns. How far is it legitimate for a *government* to "require much" of those who have much, while requiring no commitment of those who have little? If that is justice, is it also just to create astronomically high budget deficits in order to pay for that and other government spending, to the extent that every individual in future generations for years to come will already be vastly in debt to the government on the day of his or her birth? (Another stewardship issue involved is the endemic fraud and bureaucratic waste that seems inherent in government-run healthcare programs – in the U.S. seen already in Medicare and Medicaid.)

Pray for neither riches nor poverty

Many biblical references to the poor refer to the poor *among God's people*. Those in need in our families and churches must not be looked down on, ignored or refused help even while we send our charitable money and goods to the poor in our cities, nations or across the globe. God also tells Israel they must not ignore the poor who are aliens (pagan non-Israelites) living among them. Translated to a 21th century nation like the U.S., what does that mean? Does mercy require that illegal aliens be given free healthcare? What about justice, especially for those who waited their turn to become legal residents?

The Bible notes that the poor have less recourse to justice than do the rich; so God expects us to defend the "weak, fatherless, oppressed." But the Bible also acknowledges the politically incorrect truth that poverty can be self-inflicted. "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth" says (Prov. 10:4). "Drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags says (Prov. 23:21). And Paul bluntly lays down this rule to the Thessalonians: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (1 Thess. 3:10). If those principles apply in the church community, do they also apply to a government creating programs to benefit the poor, some of whom refuse to work but expect to eat?

We all, princes or paupers, are the work of God's hands, and he is neither a respecter of persons nor of wealth or poverty. If it is wrong for us or our governments to favour the rich, so is favoritism to the poor. God puts it strongly: "'Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly'" (Lev. 19:15). There is nothing inherently noble about the poor (or the wealthy). Justice demands fairness.

James tells the Christians to whom he writes that the religion God accepts as pure and faultless consists of looking after orphans and widows *and* keeping oneself from being polluted by the world (1:27). We may best be able to do that as individual taxpayers and as churches if we pray, along with the writer of Proverbs: "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Prov. 30:8-9). It may be wise to also pray for that kind of moderation for our governments as well.

Marian Van Til was a CC editor from 1984-2000. She and her husband, Ed Cassidy, live in Youngstown, NY, where Marian is writing her second book, Confessions of a Cataholic, *due out this fall. She welcomes email at: marianvantil@roadrunner.com.*

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

The cost of dropping the ball

Where there's understanding there's love. It is not what we think we "know" but what we are willing to "learn" that enriches our life.

In sports, the cost of dropping the ball can be high. And so it is in marital and family communication. The costs of not catching information sent our way can be high. Poor listening triggers annoyance, anger, irritability and confusion. Rightly or wrongly, listening ineffectively can convey that we do not care about those who are trying to dialogue with us. By contrast, listening well communicates caring and love. It tells others we value them as well as what they are telling us.

Listen to learn?

Effective listeners are receptive listeners. We listen to take in information, to think about it, and to utilize it. We listen to learn. Listening to learn means we:

*are willing to add new information and a different point of view to our own.

*are open to being influenced by other important people in our life.

*give the benefit of the doubt to important people by assuming that anything they say must have merit; if we don't see the point at first, we ask questions until we get it.

To be a receptive listener does *not* mean we have to *agree* with what the other person is saying. It means only that we listen first to what they are saying. When we understand the merit in what they are telling us, then we can add our perspective.

In general, and broadly speaking, a lot of family communication falls under two categories: cooperative listening or adversarial listening. The terms are self-explanatory, however, the real issue underlying the way we listen has a lot to do with what we are actually *thinking* to ourselves while the other person is *talking*.

Adversarial or cooperative?

In terms of adversarial listening, these are some of the things that could be going on in the mind of the listener:

*I hear the words she is saying, but will not learn much ... nothing will change my view.

*I hear "wrong" ideas in what he is saying and will speak out about these.

*What she is saying doesn't fit with my way of thinking.

*I do not like what he is saying and I am thinking about how I want to respond

*What she is saying doesn't interest me much.

*I am defensive, skeptical, or suspicious of him.

*I feel annoyed with what she is saying and it doesn't make sense to me.

*I feel the conversation is frustrating.

*Talking brings on arguments or leaves us feeling distant from each other, so I will not respond.

Cooperative listening, on the other hand, involves some of the following that could be going on in our mind:

*I learn new ideas from him.

*A lot makes sense in what she is saying.

*I can add his views to my prior way of thinking.

*I focus easily on what she is saying

*I find the conversation interesting.

*I trust what he is saying

*I ask questions when something is unclear.

*Our dialogue feels pleasant, stimulating and engaging.

*Talking brings us together.

Using the above information, can you pinpoint how the following conversations illustrate cooperative or adversarial listening?

Neville: I love reading long novels.

Olga: No you don't. I never see you reading.

Matthew: Babies' noses shouldn't run that much.

Monica: Hers sure is running. Do you think one of us should take her to a doctor?

Heidi: If you bake fish at a high temperature, say 450 degrees, it stays moist.

Henry: There you go, correcting me again.

These are just a few examples, but they show that rejecting what we hear creates an oppositional tone. Listening to take in new information, by contrast, creates an atmosphere of cooperation and a willingness to understand one another, even though we may not agree.

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.

Book Review

The Dutch Diaspora – a review

Howard J. Wiarda, *The Dutch Diaspora: The Netherlands and Its Settlements in Africa, Asia, and the Americas.*(Lanham and Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 237 pages.

Harry Boonstra

Reading and reviewing this book has been a mixed pleasure. I have learned much about the Netherlands, its history, Dutch immigrants, and especially about Dutch colonial possessions. I therefore recommend the book – but with some significant reservations.

The Dutch touch across the world

Wiarda's grandparents emigrated in the 1880s from Goutum, Friesland, to Grand Rapids, Michigan, and experienced the typical immigration frustrations and joys. Wiarda (b. 1939) attended Seymour Christian School and Grand Rapids Christian High School and then continued his higher education at the University of Michigan and other universities. He is a widely published author (70 books by his own count) in political science and international relations. He is currently a professor in International Affairs at the University of Georgia.

The theme that he pursues is borrowed from Louis Hartz and concerns the "fragments" from the old country that are retained in the (former) colonies or settlements – for example, how much Dutchness and Calvinism is left in western Michigan, compared to Indonesia? Wiarda casts his net wide and includes settlements and colonies in which the Dutch had short-lived and minimal or no influence. Still, it is interesting to note how one of the smallest European countries traveled and traded (and often settled) literally to the ends of the earth. I will not follow Wiarda to all destinations but concentrate on the more significant ones.

Old World to New

The author devotes two chapters to a study of The Netherlands: Chapter 2, "The Netherlands: A Proud History and Culture," and Chapter 6, "The Modern Netherlands: Community in Crisis." These are rather helpful summaries, with exaggeration of both subtitles, and some bloopers I will note later. A reader who is not familiar with The Netherlands and its history will especially benefit from these overviews. One correction I want to note immediately is his conception of Calvinism as concentrated in the *Hervormde Kerk* (the "state church"), and his lumping together of all church people as cookie-cutter "Calvinists."

Chapter 3, "The Dutch Community in Western Michigan," deals with the immigration from The Netherlands to the United States roughly from 1847 to 1950, and the settlements that grew out of this immigration. Actually, the only settlement he discusses in detail is Western Michigan. Here he is generally reliable, and a new student of this time and place will find an adequate summary. Chapter 4, "Growing Up Dutch: Zion on the Prairies," is largely a biographical sketch of Wiarda's youth and his family. As a student in the Christian schools and growing up in the Christian Reformed Church, Wiarda provides authentic local color of his years in Grand Rapids. He actually provides more names of uncles, aunts, and cousins, buddies and girlfriends than most readers will care for. (This tendency crops up again in Chapter 6, where we are treated to endless descriptions of travels to the Netherlands with his own family in the 1970s and later. I am not particularly interested in the details of the Wiarda family, their grand reunions in the Netherlands, the names of five-times-removed cousins, what they ate in restaurants, or to join in the author's elation whenever he encounters Frisians or Frisian history).

Chapter 5, "New Amsterdam and the East Coast Dutch" does well in summarizing the settling of New Amsterdam and its surrounding territory. Wiarda properly points out the large area which was explored and settled by the Dutch after Henry Hudson's sailing up the Hudson River in 1609. He also makes a point of the cultural and political influence of New Amsterdam, and finds his theme of "remnants " clearly reflected here, especially in terms of tolerance, limited government, freedom, and other "American" traits. What is completely lacking in his account is the history of the Reformed Dutch American Church, that is, the Reformed Church in America. The RCA in the East has a rich history that deserves at least a summary.

The ends of the earth

The remaining chapters deal with more exotic places: Chapter 7 – Brazil, Suriname and the Caribbean; Chapter 8 – The Dutch in Asia; Chapter 9 – Indonesia; Chapter 10 – South Africa; Chapter 11 – Geneva; Chapter 12 – Austro-Hungary. In some of these locations the Dutch limited their activity to trading with the local people, sometimes for only a short period; at the other extreme is South Africa, where the Dutch settled permanently. I will limit myself to some random comments on these chapters.

The colony of Suriname (now independent) has an incredible number of ethnic communities and languages. The Dutch influence is declining, although the official language is still Dutch. Here and in Curacao the Dutch exhibited their worst traits. For a long time they were the chief traders of slaves from Africa, who were auctioned off in Curacao, "where the Dutch practiced the slave trade, the break-up of families, the forced displacements, the cruelty, the treatment of humans as commodities to be bought and sold. . . " (p. 104). Many Dutch settlers owned slaves, and their cruelty sometimes surpassed the worst treatment of slaves in the South of the United States.

The relationship with Indonesia was truly colonial. Around 1600 the Dutch were first drawn there by the profit of the trade of spices, and eventually they built up a full-fledged colony on most of the (17,000!) islands. As in all colonialism, the chief aim was profit for the home country. "The economy was basically a rapacious, export-oriented, exploitive colonial system ... oriented toward the greater enrichment of the mother country and not the colony" (p. 129). Indonesia gained its independence after a brief war with the Netherlands in 1950, and nearly all traces of Dutch influence have been erased.

Chapter 10 describes the better-known story of South Africa. The Dutch East India Company established a small settlement on the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, at first mainly as a place of reprieve and fresh food for passing ships. Soon more permanent settlements came into existence further north, and the more they expanded, the more they came into contact with African tribes, whom they conquered or annihilated. These "Dutch" Afrikaners might have continued this pattern indefinitely, if they had not run into a new world power – the British. Between 1800 and 1900 the British took control of most of South Africa, spurred on especially by the richest diamond and gold deposits in the world. However, the Afrikaners regained more and more political power and in the late 1940s they officially established the despised *Apartheid* policies, which deprived black people of nearly all their rights. They were able to enforce this policy until 1994.

A regrettable omission in the book is a study of the Dutch immigrants to Canada after the Second World War. Here Wiarda would have been able to study the "fragment" theory of three or four generations and in a context that is still in progress.

My final evaluation is a mixed one. I know of no other recent book in English that deals with the same topic in any detail, and the book could serve readers as an acceptable introduction. However, the frequently careless writing, the inclusion of autobiographical trivia, and the lack of thorough research in some sections makes one wish for a more responsible treatment of an important subject.

Postscript on spelling

Usually when reviewing a book I expect a number of misspelling and minor errors, but I ignore these in my review (hoping that when others read my writing they will be equally generous). However, Wiarda's book contains such outlandish errors and bloopers that they need to be pointed out.

Misspellings include Zealand (for Zeeland); Fresian (Frisian); Vendel (Vondel); Gotom (Gotum; his ancestors' birthplace); Lieuwarden (Leeuwarden); Stellenbasch (Stellenbosch) . The Zuiderzee has been known as Ijsselmeer since 1932; Kepler was not Dutch but German. Belgium is predominantly Roman Catholic and not Calvinistic. Van Gogh did not paint the "Potato Eaters" in Friesland but in Noord Brabant. The (in)famous Calvin alumnus is Paul Schrader (not Boscher). The Synod of Dordt could hardly be called a Synod of Doubt as Wiarda does. The worst blooper is his designation of the Secession (*Afscheiding*) of 1834; Wiarda consistently calls the *Afgescheidenen* the "Remonstrants" – the folks who followed Arminius in the 1600s! An author of more than 70 books and a respectable publisher should not publish such careless nonsense.

Harry Boonstra is the Theological Librarian (emeritus) at Calvin College and Seminary.

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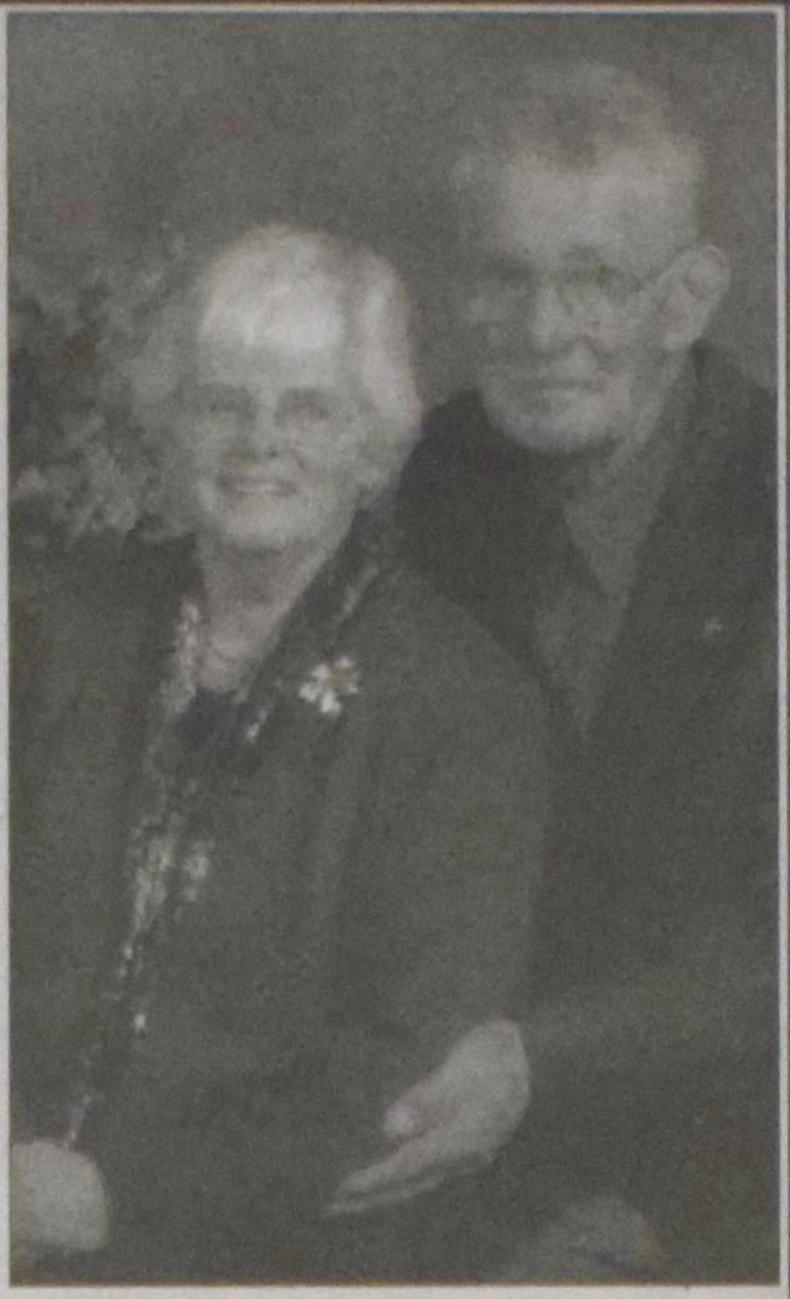

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All our love and God's blessing always,
Your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
Correspondence: 19 Donna Drive, Hagersville ON N0A 1H0

October 2, 1959 — Forest, Ontario — Psalm 84:12 — October 2, 2009 — Nepean, Ontario

O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you.
With great joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for his love and grace, we, the children and grandchildren of

Bertus and Alice Schreiber (nee **Van Rooyen**)

announce their **50th Wedding Anniversary**. We thank God for their love for each other and for the love they have given and continue to give to each one of us.

Tymen & Sylvia Van Stryland – Kyle and Vykki, *Kanata, Ontario*
Martha & Shiao Chong – Alyssa, Bethany, and Mathea, *Mississauga, Ontario*
John Schreiber, *Nepean, Ontario*
Derek & Jane Schreiber (den Otter) – Kessie and Ben, *Edmonton Alberta.*

A celebratory open house and dinner was held on August 7th, 2009 in Nepean, Ontario
Home Address: 17 Quinpool Cres, Nepean ON K2H 6H9

1959 — October 9 — 2009

With wholehearted thanks to the Lord
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Congratulations from your children and grandchildren.
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Best wishes only please.
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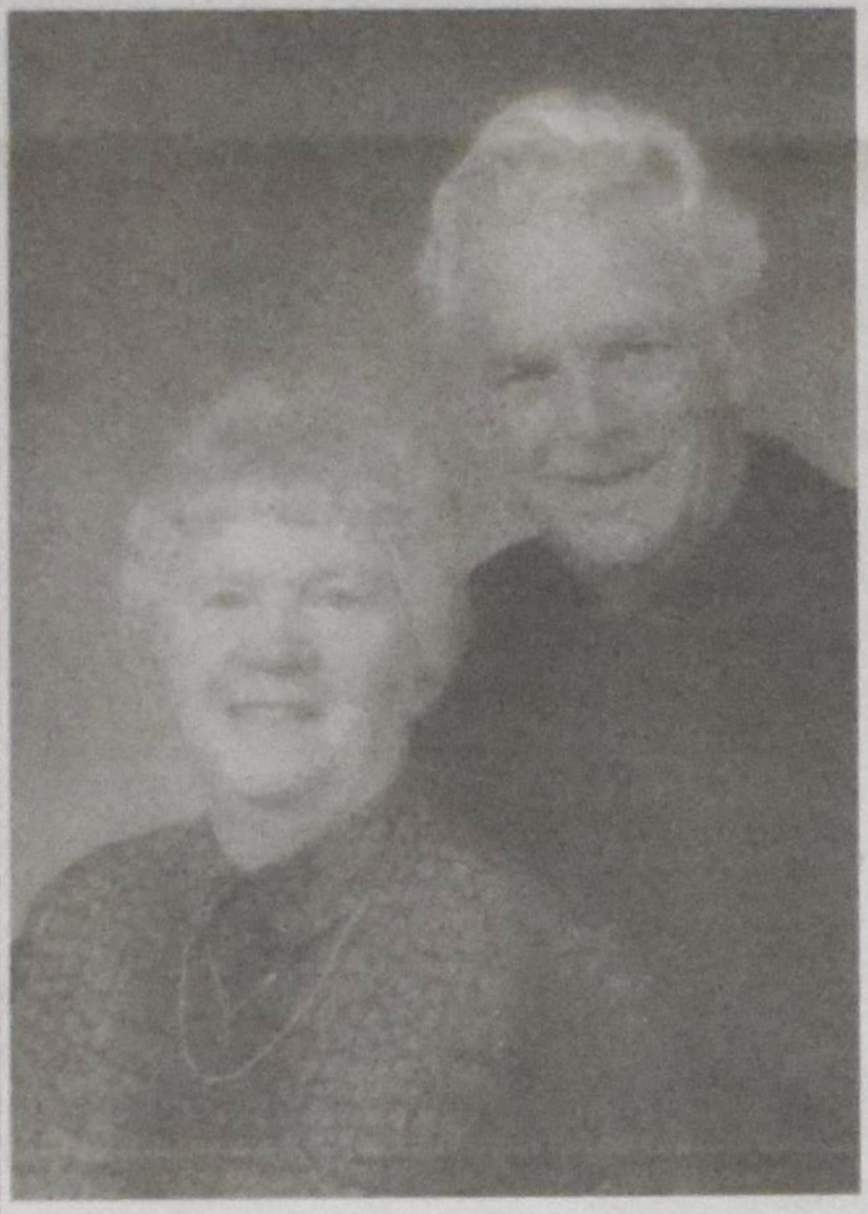

With praise and thanksgiving to God
for all the many blessings he gives

Louis and Martha Bill (nee **Hogeterp**)

celebrate with their children and grandchildren
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David, Katie, Josh, Alex

Barb & Ron Douwes, *Simcoe, ON*
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Obituary

JANETTE (Jantje) KOOISTRA
nee **Feddema**

Janette was born September 1, 1914 in Anjum Freisland, the youngest daughter of Johannes Pieter Feddema and Grietje Hiemstra. She had 6 older brothers and 2 sisters.

Jant or Jantje as she was known in Holland left the farm life for training in Arhem in missions related work. Upon graduation she worked for a time in the Benardo Homes in England. With the coming of the war she returned to Holland and met a young student of theology, Remkes Kooistra.

The attraction was mutual and after a few years of courtship they were married just before Rem was installed as pastor in their first congregation of Siegerswoude, Friesland. In a complementary roll to her husband, Jantje was active in congregation life in her own special way. She had a gift for hospitality that she practiced throughout her life. She had a beautiful voice and loved music and art. Janette was married to Rem for over 60 years and has lived in many different communities in the Netherlands and Canada serving churches and other ministries, the longest and last being in Waterloo, Ontario. They raised four children, Dorothy (John) Kralt, Jacky (Theo) VandePutte, Clare Kooistra and John (Gail) Kooistra and have the blessing of many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Janette has one surviving sibling, her older sister Siep, who lives in the Netherlands. Janette passed away September 6, 2009 just after her 95th birthday in the peace and knowledge of her Lord.

Address: C. Kooistra
1-6916 Manning Pl, Vernon BC V1B 2Y5

Personal

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Inquiries should be directed to:
Redeemer University College Search Committee
Martin Mudde, Chair
777 Garner Road E.
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sep 26 Worship conference, *Refresh and Renew,* Redeemer University College. For registration and information, visit www.redeemer.ca/worship Registration deadline: September 15

Oct 3 The Netherlands Bazaar will be held in the Thornhill Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Ave. in **Thornhill**, Ontario. See ad.

Oct 3 Organ recital at 7:30 pm, Hebron CRC, Hebron CRC, 4240 Anderson St. North, **Whitby,** ON. John Vandertuin, recitalist, composer and music critic will be performing classical and sacred selections with audience participation. For information, call **905-424-1213**

Oct 4 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.

Oct 6 Organists Jonathan Oldengarm and Wayne Carroll, with violinist Noel Laporte and cellist Samuel Bisson, present a concert of works by Rheinberger, Reger, Durufle and Guillou at KnoxPresbyterian Church, 55 Hincks St., **St. Thomas**, ON. 7:30 pm. Tickets: $15 in advance, or $20 at the door; admission is free for students and children. Proceeds benefit The Caring Cupboard and the YWCA's Harmony House.

Oct 17 Diaconal ministries hosts the 'Day of Encouragement' featuring Michael Card at Redeemer College, **Ancaster**. See ad.

Oct. 17 Leendert Kooij and the OCMA choir, Quartet and Brass do a "Benefit concert," for Eurovangelism. At Hebron C.R. Church, 4240 Anderson St. Whitby 7:30 pm. Special offering for missions.

Oct 18 Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church in **Bowmanville**, Ontario celebrating 60 yearswith a service at 6:30 pm. See ad.

Oct 23 Ambassadors Celebration. 40 years. Calvin Christian School, **Hamilton**, ON. Call 905-389-2104 to reserve. See ad p.18

Oct 24 Hamilton Young Adult reunion for Young Adults of the late 70s and early 80s. Theme Find Us Faithful. Time 9:00 a.m. til 4:00 p.m. at Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby.** Visit our website http://youngadults.myevent.com for details or call Jake Ellens at 519-448-4321or email hamiltonyoungadult@yahoo.ca.

Oct 24 Leendert Kooij and the OCMA choir, Quartet and Brass do a "Benefit Concert," for Eurovangelism. At St. George's Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich St, Guelph, 7:30. Special offering for missions.

Nov 20 Christian Festival Concert at 7:30 p.m. at the Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto. Call 416-636-9779 or email landmkooy@rogers.com See Ad.

Nov. 21, 22 Immanuel CRC, **Hamilton**, ON, 50th anniversary. More information following issues or see www.immanuelministries.ca

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SENIORS' DAY

Monday, October 26

Registration starts at 9:30am with activities planned from 10:00am to 3:00pm

MORNING SESSION:

"Technology and the Tower of Babel"
by Dr. Derek Schuurman,
Assistant Professor of Computer Science at
Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario.

"Rapid advancements in robotics and computer technology have brought many beneficial changes to our lives. But can technology carry people away from God? Does the ancient story of the Tower of Babel have anything to tell us about robots or modern computer technology? This talk will explore some of the benefits of robotics and computer technology as well as some of the issues and concerns."

AFTERNOON SESSION:

Musical Program

Guests will have an opportunity to meet with their grandchildren during the afternoon's coffee break.

Registration fee is $20.00 per person (cash or cheque), including a roast beef buffet luncheon. For more information and to register, please call Magda Beukes at 905.648.2139 x4208. Last date of registration is Friday, October 16.

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Netherlands Bazaar
Saturday October 3rd, 2009

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10:00 am – 10:00 pm

Market Place
10am-6pm

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10am-9pm

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News

Leadership lessons from a retrofitted Lincoln

John Clement

Neil Young has a vision that has leadership lessons for agriculture. Most know the singer-songwriter as either the crooner of acoustic ballads or the prototype of grunge rock. But the former Canadian musician is also sympathetic to the plight of family farmers and has been a strong force and founder of the U.S. Farm Aid concerts. He also fuels his tour bus with U.S.-based biofuels derived from the crops generated by farmers.

Young has now taken on a new project that's turning heads. Frustrated by the U.S. dependence on foreign oil, plus concerned about climate change from automobile emissions, the singer-songwriter is dedicating a chunk of his own money and time into a project that could shame American automobile companies into changing their approach to manufacturing and product design. Quite simply, Young is taking a 1959 Lincoln Continental that weighs over two-and-a-half tons and is retrofitting it to run on electricity while obtaining 100 miles per gallon on the fuel it does consume.

Entitled Lincvolt, the open source project is envisioned by Young as a practical way of demonstrating how good old American innovation can allow us to have our cake and eat it too. In Young's vision, that includes a new generation of large cars that are environmentally friendly, deliver high mileage, reinvent the American car industry, create markets for alternative fuels and reduce international tensions regarding oil supplies.

Young is well on his way to achieving his goals. So far, the Lincoln has delivered 68 miles per gallon on a total budget that is astonishingly low compared to that typically given to research and development purposes. There's even a possibility that the car will generate more power than it consumes with the opportunity to sell to the power grid. Young plans to eventually take the 19.5-foot-long behemoth on a cross-country tour, with people able to track both its progress and efficiency through the Lincvolt website.

Although the Neil Young Lincoln Continental project isn't strictly agricultural, it does contain useful lessons for those involved in farming and public policy design. Young has maintained a rigorous commitment to the marketplace, pursued leading edge innovation and has demonstrated a practical leadership centered in what works on the ground. As the agricultural community strives to develop new options for safety net programs, or new opportunities for the hog industry, it's important to keep a clear eye on the goals we hope to achieve and be committed to both innovation and practical leadership that works for farmers. Like Neil Young's old Lincoln, agriculture may just need a retrofit that combines the best of the old with the new.

John Clement is the General Manager of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. CFFO is supported by 4,353 family farmers across Ontario.

A younger Young and his 1959 Lincoln Continental on tour almost fifty years ago.

Sudoku 9x9 - Medium (136821380) www.sudoku-puzzles.net

		6				8		
	1		4		5		7	
5	8						1	3
		2	6		8	3		
7								8
		4	5		1	2		
1	2						3	9
	4		9		3		2	
		7				1		

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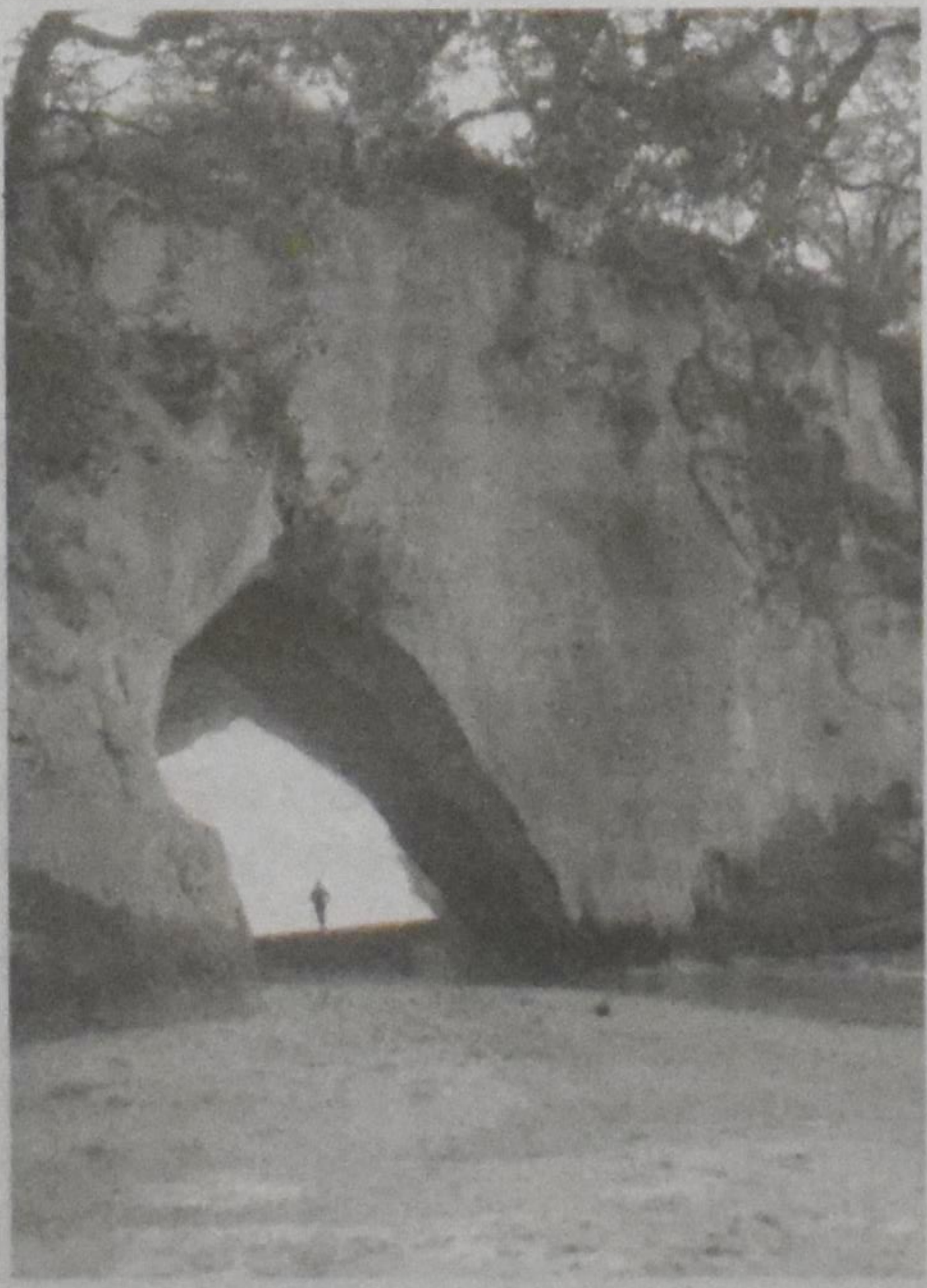

Cathedral Cove in the Coromandel region of New Zealand. This beach was accessible via a 40 minute walk that took me two hours as I was stopping every few meters to take a photo. This area was used as the site where the Pevensie children first re-enter Narnia in the movie *Prince Caspian*.

Photo taken by Anita Medcalf.

Share your photo. Email: angelabick@gmail.com

Odds and Trends

Wallabies these days

On the Australian island state of Tasmania, a number of wallabies have been found "as high as a kite" after eating opium poppies. Lara Giddings, a government official, reported at a hearing on poppy field security in June that the wallabies go around in circles after getting stoned. "We see crop circles in the poppy fields from wallabies," she says.

Tasmania has 500 legal poppy fields, which supply fifty percent of the world's opium used in making morphine and other painkillers. Wallabies are a marsupial similar to kangaroos. Other animals, over the years, have been seen acting strangely after consuming poppies, but this is the first time there's been a terrestrial explanation for crop circles quite like this.

12th vs 20th century technology

Last week, a call-centre business in Johannesburg held a unique race: Winston the carrier pigeon versus the Internet. The call-centre has two offices, just 60 km apart, but unreliable Internet service often frustrates data-sharing between locations. At the same moment that Winston took off, carrying four gigabytes of data, an employee of the call centre pushed a computer button to send the same info online.

The pigeon won. In fact, it wasn't even close. When Winston landed after two hours and seven minutes, only four percent of the information had been transferred via the Internet. As one correspondent from South Africa writes, "Africans pay some of the highest prices for some of the least reliable Internet service in the world. And if a country like South Africa – relatively prosperous and developed – can't solve this problem, then it's going to need a lot more pigeons."

A small family get-together

In 1979, the Chinese government implemented its one-child policy for married urban couples in an attempt to control a rapidly expanding population. This led to numerous human rights violations such as forced abortion and even female infanticide.

Now, for the first time in thirty years, some authorities are allowing – even encouraging – second children. Instead of worrying about too many kids, now the government is concerned that the rising number of elderly people will cause an imbalanced demographic. In Shanghai, for example, one-fifth of the population is over sixty. If the Chinese government does not reverse its one-child policy, experts predict that children today will be faced with caring for four aging parents (including a spouse's) and as many as eight grandparents in twenty years. As the third generation of only children, there will be no siblings or even cousins to help with this task.

Angela Reitsma Bick